

THE ORIGINS OF IT ALL!: A STUDY OF GENESIS

XXV.) A FAITH SACRIFICE

GENESIS 22

Q: When someone talks about a 'test' what does that mean to you?

Q: How and why does God 'test'?

A.) GOD'S TEST (vv.1-2)

- Many years (Isaac's childhood) have passed without note of a single word from God to Abraham.
- Finally, God breaks the silence and calls out again to Abraham. Only, this time it is different.

1.) Prologue (v. 1a)

- We are told, after the fact, that God is testing Abraham but did not know.
- As a test, God's divine command comes suddenly and unexpectedly.
- This is also the first time this word (*nasah*), usually translated as “test” or “tempt” is used in the Bible. It means “to test” or “to try” and is most often translated “to prove.”
- That is, it is a challenge issued to give one an opportunity to prove themselves worthy and thus to be approved.

2.) Abraham's Ordeal (vv. 1b-2)

“your son . . . your only [son] Isaac, whom you love”

Q: Why the strong emphasis here?

- The double emphasis on “son” would most certainly remind Abraham of the decision he had to face before with Ishmael, sending him away and 'losing' him.
- Further, the strong emphasis greatly reinforces the tremendous value of that which the LORD will ask Abraham to sacrifice.
- This is also the first time the word “love” appears in Scripture. And, in it's first use, it is used to refer to the love of a father for his son.
- An early pointing to God's greatest expression of love being in His son and just how valuable and tremendous a sacrifice that was!
- **Galatians 3:16; Hebrews 11:17-19**

“... go ... and offer him ...”

- Be careful to notice the LORD's specific words here. He does not say “slay”, though that is surely what is most naturally assumed. He says “offer.”
- **Romans 12:1-2**

B.) ABRAHAM'S **OBEDIENCE** (vv. 3-10)

- Notice how throughout the description of Abraham's obedience, it is all about his responding actions! There is absolutely nothing about his feelings or thoughts.
- God speaks, Abraham acts. He doesn't pause to assess how he feels about the situation or to think through all the implications and/or what he might consider reasonable alternatives or rationalizations. He just simply OBEYS!

1.) Without **Hesitation** (v.3a)

- Bam! God speaks and directs. First thing in the morning, Abraham packs and departs to do God's will.

2.) The **Journey** (vv. 3b-6)

- Abraham most certainly rode a donkey because of his advanced age.
- Don't miss the parallels:
- Abraham rides a donkey on his journey to sacrifice his son. Jesus rode a donkey to enter Jerusalem as we was about to be sacrificed by His Father.
- They journeyed for three days and all of this time the burden of what he was called to do weighed at least on Abraham. As a father, it must have felt like 'walking dead.' Jesus was in the grave for three days.
- They stop at a specific place determined by God for this great test and sacrifice. Later, God's temple (the center of sacrificial offerings) is built in this same place (**2 Chron. 3:1**)
- Abraham announces the incredible, intimate sacrifice he goes to present as “*worship*.”
- Not duty or obligation. He doesn't lie and call it something it's not. He doesn't short-change and say “we're going for a walk” or even simply state the literal physical act, “we're going to make a sacrifice.” No, his focus is on the true meaning and nature of what he sets out to do: *worship*.
- The word “*worship*” literally means to 'bow down.' To worship God, as we see here, is then “*to bow down to His will, recognizing and acknowledging that His will is best*” (Morris, pg. 378). We see this also in how Christ laid down His life.
- The rest of this journey is one that they must make by themselves and before the LORD.

3.) One **Question** (vv. 7-8)

- Where is the worthy and appropriate sacrifice?
- The answer: God's provision.
- Abraham was not here ignoring the issue, so much as placing it squarely and appropriately in God's Hands.

- The sacrifice that is appropriate and suitable for the LORD is the One that He asks for and provides.
- Together, then, they continue.

4.) **The Moment (vv. 9-10)**

- Decision time. It's the end of the journey and time to either pass or fail the test, to prove worth or unworthy.
- Just as Abraham obediently proceeds to prepare his son as a sacrifice, so Isaac obediently follows his father's direction and wisdom in worship.
- Abraham does not coerce or force the son, and the son proceeds freely and willingly.
- Even at the moment of sacrifice, Abraham does not hesitate. He does not stop to feel, think, contemplate, beg or wonder. He does not pause to look around for a lamb – a more pleasing and preferable alternative.
- Abraham simply lifts his hands to slay his son, whom he loves, as an ultimate sacrifice to God. And so, generations later, it was with God the Father and Jesus the Son.
- He fully expects and intends to kill Isaac. Later Scripture (**Hebrews 11:17-19**) tells us Abraham was trusting in God to afterwards raise Isaac from the dead, but there is no evidence of his ever suspecting or even hoping for what happens instead.

C.) **GOD'S PROVISION (vv. 11-14)**

- Be careful to notice: God does not intervene until *after* the sacrifice had been made. **How?**
- The sacrifice the LORD asked of Abraham was one of mind, spirit and will. When he lifted that knife and demonstrated absolute willingness to trust God even in this, he made the sacrifice God had asked of him.
- In response, God provides not a lamb but a ram. **What's the difference?**
- As Morris writes: *“The complete fulfillment must await the true Lamb, the Lamb of God. The ram was offered up on the altar as a burnt offering in substitution for his son, thus adding to the teaching of substitutionary sacrifice to the type”* (pg. 381).
- A promise, reminder and foreshadowing that for man's greatest need (reconciliation with God), the LORD Will Provide – and in Christ He absolutely did!

D.) **GOD'S BLESSING (vv. 15-19)**

- Only after the sacrifice of the substitute, does God now bestow His blessings upon Abraham and, through him, all humanity who follow after him in faith and righteousness.
- *“because you have obeyed my command.”*
- NOT, because Abraham was a good guy, wasn't as evil as his neighbors, performed a ritual, or was 'special.' BUT, because he faithfully obeyed God – even and especially in fear and trembling and in a situation of great uncertainty and emotional storm.

CONCLUDING POINTS: MAKING SENSE OF IT ALL

Dr. Allen P. Ross summarizes:

“In understanding this sacrifice it is important to remember that God asked him to sacrifice something that he was sure was the will of God for him to have. The principle of sacrifice is thereby revealed here, for God does not ask worshipers to give him that which they do not treasure or that which they no longer care for or need. Rather, God requires his worshipers offer him the best that they have, even their firstborn . . . The Lord calls believers to obey his instructions, including sacrificing themselves and their possessions to him in fear and devotion. This step may require relinquishing some personal possession, ambition, or direction that seems clearly to be God's design” (pg. 402).

"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters--yes, and even his own life--he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

(Luke 14:26-27)

God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent His One and Only Son into the world so that we might live through Him. Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Dear friends, if God loved us in this way, we also must love one another.

(1 John 4:9-11)