

## **GENESIS 22:1-14**

### **THE FAITH TEST**

When I was in school, I hated pop quizzes. Remember those? The teacher would say something like this: "OK, everyone. Put all your books and notes away, take out a piece of paper and a pencil..." Then they would proceed to ask you a question or two and you had to write down the answer. Hopefully I had been paying attention and could come up with the correct answer. I didn't always do well, however because my memory isn't the best and didn't always pay attention like I should. I much preferred the scheduled exams that I had time to prepare for. Well, in our lesson today God tests Abraham. He gives him a pop quiz of sorts to see if he has been paying attention to what God has been telling him.

So, what had God told Abraham up to this point? That he will become a great nation, have many descendants, and be given the land of Canaan to possess. In Abraham all the nations of the world will be blessed. In Genesis Chapter 17 Abraham was informed by God that his wife, Sarah, would bear a son, and the son's name would be Isaac. It is through Isaac and not Ishmael that God would fulfill all of His promises to Abraham. In Genesis 18:10 the Lord told Abraham: "this time next year your wife Sarah will have a son!" And, true to His word, in one year the child of promise, Isaac, was born. That's what we talked about last time.

Isaac is Plan A. According to God he was always THE plan. There is no Plan B. And just so Abraham knows that for certain, God has him send Ishmael and Hagar away for good. Knowing all this, Abraham's faith is put to the test...

READ Genesis 22:1-4

Please carefully notice what the text says and what it does not say. God tells Abraham to do something and Abraham does as he is told. Abraham knows that the voice speaking to him is God's and Abraham obeys, just like he has always done in the past. That's what the text says.

Notice what it does not say. First, Abraham does not question God. Second, he does not argue with God. Third, Abraham does not struggle with God's instruction. None of these are mentioned in this passage. No, Abraham simply obeys God. That's the character of Abraham – he believes God. He is a man of faith.

Well, Abraham responds quickly. Early the next morning he takes Isaac and two servants, the wood for the offering (which he chops up himself) and sets out on the 3-day journey to the land of Moriah. We do not know exactly where this location is, but most Bible scholars believe that this may well have been on the same mountain where Solomon would build his temple some 1,100 years later. The site of the present-day Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

READ Gen 22:5-8. Notice in verse 5 what Abraham tells his two young servants. "I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you." He makes it clear that both he and Isaac will be coming back. Abraham knows this. Please don't miss that statement. It indicates Abraham's mindset. He knows Isaac is coming back. ASK CLASS (by way of review) how Abraham knows this.

[Answer: Based on what God has promised him unconditionally. After all, a multitude of descendants is yet to come... THRU ISAAC! That's what God said. So, Isaac cannot die or at least he can't remain dead. Otherwise God would be a liar.]

As they are walking up the mountain together, Isaac asks Abraham a rather obvious question in verse 6: "Where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" We have everything else, but where's the sacrificial animal? Abraham answers his son honestly and with complete conviction, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." Abraham firmly believes that God will provide a sacrificial lamb. Abraham knows that somehow, some way, God is going to intervene. Now, let's just stop right here and think about this...one of two things has to happen. Either (A) God will provide an animal before Abraham has to kill Isaac or (B) Abraham will

kill Isaac and then God will raise Isaac back to life. Abraham knows that one of these two scenarios has to play out. ASK CLASS AGAIN how Abraham knows this. [same answer as before] Abraham's reply to Isaac indicates what he either believes or hopes will happen – that God will provide a sacrifice. But Abraham is fully prepared to plunge the knife into Isaac if he has to.

The writer of Hebrews, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, adds this insight: [one of my DTS profs said that the N.T. is the commentary on the O.T. and here is a case in point] READ Hebrews 11:17-19. I will comment on the last part of verse 19 after I finish this story.

READ Genesis 22:9-12. Abraham passes the test. Just as Abraham had anticipated, acting in faith, God intervenes, but notice God's timing... God waits until Abraham has built the altar, placed the wood, bound his son and placed him on the altar. I imagine old Abraham, while he is doing all of this, is looking around the whole time and listening, just waiting for God to do something or say something. But he sees and hears nothing. So, Abraham, after he has everything ready, picks up his knife. The last step of faith... and only then does God speak up. The test of faith is complete. Well done Abraham!

READ Genesis 22:13-14. Abraham sees a ram caught in a thicket by his horns. He catches it and offers it as a burnt offering to God instead of his son. Notice that it is not a lamb like Abraham had thought, but it IS an animal that God provided for the sacrifice. On that day God provided a ram for the sacrifice. But there would come a day some 2,000 years later near this same spot where God would provide a lamb for a sacrifice for the sins of the world. John the Baptist proclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, the Lamb of God, perfect, without spot or blemish, would be crucified on a Roman cross for the sins of the whole world. "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6). Jesus died for your sins and my sins. But then He was resurrected

and ascended back to the Father. In Revelation Chapter 5 we see our exalted Lord as a Lamb standing, as if slain, taking the scroll from His Father and the heavenly throng shouting, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." (Revelation 5:6,12). So, I guess you could say that Abraham was right when he told Isaac, "God will provide for Himself the lamb."

Now let me go back to the last part of Hebrews 11:19 – "from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back." Abraham understood that what happened that day on top of that mountain with his only son Isaac represented what God would do in the future through His only Son. Abraham went up to the mountain with the intent of offering up Isaac, knowing that if that happened God could and would raise him from the dead. But God intervened and provided a substitute (a ram) in place of Isaac. Christ in His death on the cross became our substitute. It was what some theologians call a "vicarious" death. A death in our place. It should have been us on the cross. But instead, God's Son, Jesus, took our place. He was our substitute. "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21) His sacrifice was for us. And Christ's subsequent resurrection was analogous to Abraham's receiving Isaac back alive from the brink of death. And so it is with us. "We had the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And he will yet deliver us." (2 Corinthians 1:9-10) Jesus said in John 8:56, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." And so it was that up on top of the mountain that day, that Abraham saw Christ's day and rejoiced. He worshipped God as he had told his two servants he would do. So the writer of Hebrews declares that Abraham received Isaac back as a type of the resurrection in Christ. And the NT teaches that we too, like Jesus, will be bodily resurrected one day.

There are several applications from today's lesson:

- (1) Like He did with Abraham, sometimes God tests our faith. James tells us in Chapter 1 of his epistle that God tests us, sends trials our way for the purpose of refining our faith and making us more dependent on Him.
- (2) It wasn't just that Abraham had faith. The important thing is who was the object of Abraham's faith – GOD. His faith was based on what God had told him. And so it is that we can operate fully in faith based on what God has told us in His Holy Word!
- (3) God may ask us to do some unusual things.
- (4) God will always come through and act in accordance to His word – but it will be in His time and in His way.