# Abraham’s Greatest Test

Lesson for Sunday, November 5, 2023

TEXT: Genesis 22

WHY THIS LESSON:

* We are actually in the middle of a study through the book of James. In the text we are currently studying, James uses Abraham as an example of someone who proved their faith by their works.
* In Romans, Paul also uses Abraham to make the point that we are only saved by faith – without any works.
* So, to better understand James 2, we need to understand Genesis 22.

INTRODUCTION:

* What is the hardest thing you have ever endured? Why was it so difficult? *Allow for discussion…*
  + What did you learn through your experience? Point out that Christianity allows purpose in the midst of trials.
* Today we will see that God gave Abraham a very strange command that would be a difficult test for any person to endure, and we will see how Abraham responded and be reminded that God can always be trusted.

CONTEXT:

* God had fulfilled His promise and given Abraham and Sarah a son, who they named Isaac. By the time of chapter 22, Isaac was most likely 20-25 years old, and some scholars even believe he was in his early 30’s. The word “lad” that is used here is translated as “young man” in several other passages.
* Remember God’s promise to Abraham – that he would make of him a great nation. Isaac was the beginning of that promise. Then God asks Abraham to do the unthinkable.

OUTLINE:

* 1. God’s strange **command** (vs. 1-2)
     1. What does verse 1 mean when it says that God “tempted” Abraham?
        1. Does God tempt any person to do evil? Give Bible proof.
        2. Take them back to James 1:13-15.
        3. The word literally means to put to the test or to prove.
        4. God was testing Abraham and his commitment. This was an opportunity for Abraham to prove his faith.
     2. What did God ask Abraham to do in verse 2? Why would this seem so strange to Abraham? Why does this sound so strange to us? *Discuss…*
        1. God had always condemned offering human sacrifices. God’s request of Abraham seemed to contradict God’s previous commands.
        2. Don’t forget that Isaac was Abraham’s only heir! How would his family be “as innumerable as the stars” if his son was to die?
     3. Notice the location God sent Abraham to – a mountain in the land of Moriah.
        1. History tells us this is the same place on the eastern edge of Jerusalem on which Solomon would one day build the Temple.
        2. Some believe that it is the exact mountain where Jesus would one day be crucified.
  2. Abraham’s radical **obedience** (vs. 3-8)
     1. Notice Abraham’s instant obedience in verse 3. He rose up early and headed out with Isaac.
     2. Notice how Abraham also took with him the items he would need to carry out his assignment (wood).
     3. Discuss:
        1. It doesn’t seem Abraham had any hesitation.
        2. What degree of faith did it take for Abraham to respond like this?
        3. Did God deserve this type of faith? Why or why not?
     4. Verse 4 tells us that it took three days arrive at their location. What do you think they talked about? What do you think was happening in Abraham’s head as they traveled?
     5. In verse 7 Isaac begins to notice that something is missing. He asks his father, “Where is the lamb?” He had seen sacrifices and knew the key element was missing – or so he thought.
     6. Abraham answers in verse 8, “God will provide Himself a lamb.”
        1. Do you see it? Do you see Abraham’s faith?
        2. How could Abraham say that? He trusted in the character of God. He trusted that God would do what He said He would do.
        3. God had never given Abraham a reason not to trust Him, so he could trust God even when it didn’t seem right.
     7. There are other clues to the faith that Abraham had that day.
        1. In verse 5, Abraham told the men that they would go to worship and would then “come again unto you.”
        2. The writer of Hebrews makes this point in 11:17-19. Abraham believed that even if he had to kill Isaac, God would raise Isaac to life again.
  3. God’s perfect **provision** (vs. 9–14)
     1. It was now the moment of truth. Try to picture the scene in your mind.
        1. Isaac (the son) allows Abraham (the father) to bind him (9).
        2. Abraham brings the knife up to slay his son – total obedience (10).
     2. In verse 11, the angel of the Lord (we believe an appearance of Christ) stops Abraham in the act!
     3. Abraham had passed the test (12)! They looked up and God had provided a ram for the burnt offering (13).
     4. Abraham calls the place Jehovah-Jireh – the Lord will **provide**.

APPLICATION/CONCLUSION:

* Do you see the Gospel?
  + Isaac carrying the wood as Jesus carried His cross…
  + Isaac obeying His Father and placing himself on the altar like Jesus obeyed His Heavenly Father and willing gave His life a sacrifice…
  + God providing a ram for Abraham as He provided us the Lamb 2000 years later.
* Was the test really for God or for Abraham? What impact do you think this made on Abraham moving forward from that day?
* Believing God is the most important thing we can do. What situation is there in your life where you simply need to believe God and trust what He has said?