

Sent: Wednesday, January 23, 2019 1:27 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Genesis 22!

"For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness!" (Romans 4:3)

Last week we were all elated with the miraculous birth of Isaac! God had fulfilled His promise! The "seed" was given! Descendants of Abraham now seemed highly likely! Abraham even had a stake in the Land of Canaan, with the well of Beersheba! God must have a marvelous plan!

But then the shocking twist of Genesis 22!

"Now it came about, after these things (it may have been more than 20 years later, according to the Jewish historian, Josephus!), that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham! ...Take now, your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac! And go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering, on one of the mountains of which I will tell you!" Wow! Are you kidding, Abraham must have said to himself! Could it be that God was turning out to be just like the other deities of the ancient world who required "child sacrifices"?

And yet Abraham knew better! God had proved Himself faithful and just--and friend--to Abraham over and over! Yet the instructions from God, though seemingly outrageous, were crystal clear and couldn't be denied! There was no alternative! He would simply "trust and obey"!

"So Abraham rose up early in the morning..." (Genesis 22:3 says), made all the preparations and set out to go to the place where God had told him--accompanied by "two of his young men...and Isaac, his son"! Three days later (it was a distance of over 40 miles), he saw the place (Mount Moriah) and asked the "two young men" to wait behind while he and "the lad" would go up to "worship," and then "return"! He specifically said "we"! He and Isaac would return! Indicating his belief that somehow God would work it all out! Perhaps somehow raising him from the dead after being sacrificed? Or whatever!

On the way up to the mount, Isaac asked, as you might expect, about the lamb for the sacrifice, and Abraham replied that "God would provide for Himself (or Himself for) the lamb..." Words, translated either way, which "Willmington's Guide to the Bible" calls "a complete summary of the Bible"! (May have to think about that one!)

Well, when they got to "the place where God told him," Abraham "built the altar and arranged the wood and bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar..." Genesis 22:9-10 says! (What can we say about Isaac? He was certainly old and strong enough to resist, but apparently submitted to it all! Must have had great "faith in his father"--and in his father's Father! Wow!)

You know the rest of the story! Just as Abraham "stretched out his arm and took the knife to slay his son," an angel from heaven called out: "Abraham! Abraham!" (twice for emphasis) ordering him to stop and "do nothing to him"--for "now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me!" (It must have been God Himself who

called!) Then Abraham "looked up and saw a ram caught in the thicket...and went and took it and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son"! Hallelujah!

Genesis 22:14 says, "Abraham called name of the place "Jehovah-jireh"--meaning "The Lord will provide!" How appropriate! And prophetic! Turns out "the place" (Mount Moriah) would become the "threshing floor" of Ornan, the Jebusite, which David, the king, would later purchase to build an altar to the Lord, there to offer his own sacrifice--and pray for God's mercy--after he had "sinned greatly" by "numbering the people"! (You can read the full story in II Samuel 24) But there's more! It became the place where Solomon would build the temple (II Chronicles 3:1)--and, more significantly, the place (or near the place) where Christ would offer up Himself as the "supreme sacrifice" for the sin of the world! Thus the significance of the name given to the place by Abraham! "The Lord will provide!"

Well, our story is not finished! Genesis 22:15-18 records a "second visit" from the Lord, reaffirming the "Abrahamic Covenant"! "By Myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand of the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice!" Wow!

No wonder Arnold's "Encountering the Book of Genesis" calls this passage the "summit of the Abrahamic narrative"! And, interestingly, Willington's Guide calls it, appropriately I think, "Abraham's Calvary"!

It is all about Calvary! Pastor Jesse, in fact, gave a sermon on this text on February 1, 2015 (nearly 4 years ago! I've got it noted in my Bible!), titled "Six Ways the Call of Abraham Prepares Us for the Gospel in the New Testament"! Including his first point that "God requires a sacrifice;" secondly, that the sacrifice is "the only Son;" and that "the sacrifice is a substitute"! (You have to go back to the sermon to take it all in!) And so Genesis 22 is a perfect--I want to say "beautiful" (although "bloody too") picture of the work of Christ on the Cross! At Calvary!

That may explain most emphatically the reason for the Old Testament story! John the Baptist was right on when he proclaimed, upon first witnessing Jesus: "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) Think also of John 3:16!

And, less familiarly, Paul wrote in II Corinthians 5:21, "He (God the Father) has made Him (Jesus Christ the Son) to be sin on our behalf (for us!), so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him!" (A great verse supporting what's become known as the "substitutionary atonement"!)

Well there's another important lesson we can glean from this story! And that was for Abraham himself! The final and supreme "test" of Abraham's faith--which he passed, with flying colors! Dr. Constable notes that every time Abraham was tested, or made a sacrifice for God, God responded by blessing him more! And every time it resulted in a deeper relationship with God! These lessons apply to us as well!

James 1:2-4 says "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance! And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing!"

Warren Wiersbe wrote this: "At the age of 75 Abraham enrolled in the "School of Faith." Now he was over 100 and he was still having soul-stretching experiences! We're never too old to face new challenges, fight new battles, and learn new truths! When we stop learning, we stop growing; and when we stop growing, we stop living!" (Now it's getting personal!)

Dr. Constable describes the radical nature of true faith as: "tremendous demands and incredible blessings!"

So, has your faith been tested? Lately? Again, citing Wiersbe, "Our faith is not really tested until God asks us to bear what seems unbearable; do what seems unreasonable; and expect what seems impossible!"

So we've "experienced" the final, climatic episode of Abraham's journey of faith, which began in Genesis 12! (But not ours!)

Go with God, men, this week--as you "trust and obey"!

Lowell