

Sent: Wednesday, February 22, 2017 7:17 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on the Sacrifice of Isaac!

"By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son! It was he to whom it was said: "In Isaac your descendants shall be called!" He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type!"

The full story is recorded for posterity in Genesis 21-22--and it's often referred to as the "supreme test" of Abraham's faith, since it required Abraham, after a long wait, having experienced the miracle of Isaac's birth, now to "place him on the altar," thus giving up the one thing on which everything else that God had promised him depended! Wow!

Interestingly, it wasn't the first-time Abraham was tested in a similar fashion! In Genesis 21 we read how Sarah wanted Abraham to get rid of Hagar and Ishmael, after she found Ishmael "mocking" Isaac! Abraham obviously loved Ishmael and, many years before the birth of Isaac, had even pleaded with God to make him the beneficiary of God's promises (Gen. 17:11). But, even more interestingly, God told Abraham to listen to her--and declared again that it was going to be "through Isaac that your descendants shall be named"! And so, Abraham obeyed God, rising "early in the morning...packing bread and water...and sending them away"--in effect "leaving the ball in God's court"! And, with Abraham taken out of the picture, God provided for their needs--and promised to "make a great nation of him" as well! And we know the rest of the story!

And so, through this and other experiences, Abraham "grew strong in his faith...and did not waver in unbelief...being fully assured that what God had promised He was able to perform (Rom. 4:20-21) --even, if necessary, raising Isaac from the dead (Heb. 11:19)! And so, Abraham was better prepared for what was to take place as he approached the mount of Moriah! Which reminds us of the words of Jim Elliot, the martyred mission, who had written: "he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose!"

The story, of course, draws attention to, and is a "foreshadowing" of God's sacrifice of His "only begotten Son"! And of what would become known as the "substitutionary atonement"! In fact, Haley's Handbook notes that "it was a shadow, in the birth of the Hebrew nation, of the very grand event the nation was established to bring about!"

Isaac was in many ways a picture of the coming Jesus! Both were loved by their father! Both offered themselves willingly! Both carried the "wood up the hill" where they would be sacrificed! On the same hill, it is conjectured! And both were "delivered from death on the third day!"

Both delivered from death? Hebrews 11:19 says that "figuratively speaking," Abraham did receive Isaac back--suggesting that when God provided the ram for sacrifice, in effect Isaac was delivered from death! You might say that Isaac was "as good as dead" on the first day when they headed up to Moriah! (A little like Abraham and Sarah who were "as good as dead" when they

had Isaac!) And so, like Christ, Isaac was received back from the dead, "on the third day," figuratively speaking!

God has a way of raising people from the dead! Like us who were once "dead in our sin"! The words of Jesus, speaking to the Sadducees (who didn't believe in the resurrection!) seem to fit well here: "But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God! "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob!" He is not the God of the dead but of the living!" (Matt. 22:31-32)

And, as our memory verse (Rom. 4:3) states: "Because Abraham believed God, it was credited to him as righteousness!" And, according to Gen. 22:15-19, God was pleased and reaffirmed His promises! As one writer put it: Abraham's supreme act of obedience drew God's supreme assurance of blessing!

And, again interestingly, the verses that follow, in Genesis 22:20-24, introduce us to the future bride of Isaac--Rebekah! Remember Abraham's brother Nahor, back in Mesopotamia? Well he had a son named Bethuel who became the father of Rebekah--and it was Rebekah who would become the bride of Isaac's, thus preventing Isaac from being absorbed through marriage into the Canaanite culture! And they would become the parents of Jacob, who's named would be changed to "Israel"! And that's how it all began! But more on that to come!

Aren't God's ways of working in the lives of those who believe in Him and live by faith amazing? We are challenged to be "imitators" of those who through "faith and patience" inherited the promises!

Next week, more on Isaac – and about Jacob and Esau!

Have a great week, men!

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