

## GENESIS 22:9-24 (THE LORD WILL PROVIDE)

**Introduction:** Today we're going to look at the completion of the greatest test of faith imaginable. Abraham's test is answered in a glorious and wonderful way and each detail of the story looks forward to something even greater – the coming Messiah. The riches of this passage can only make us stand in awe of what God has done for each of us through the Person of Jesus.

**Text Verse:** <sup>39</sup> And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, <sup>40</sup> God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. Hebrews 11:39, 40

Abraham, along with a host of other faithful souls recorded in the Bible, or who lived in faith without any record of their life, have waited to see the fulfillment of God's promises, but they are still waiting because God will bring us all near to Him together, in one joyous gathering and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### I. By Faith Abraham...

A few weeks ago at the beginning of the sermon about Isaac's birth, I said this – "Everything about our relationship with God ultimately comes down to faith; it is based on faith – proper faith. Misdirected faith is, after all, wasted faith."

I bring that up again now because what we looked at last week and what we will finish looking at today is not nearly so much a test of obedience, which is what most people think of when they read the story, as it is a test of faith.

I say this because on several occasions, God stated that Isaac is the son of promise. In chapter 21, as Hagar and Ishmael were being dismissed from his home, we read this –

“But God said to Abraham, “Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called.”

Genesis 21:12

What Abraham has been asked to do and what he is going up the hill to actually do is much more a test of faith than it is obedience. Obedience would be the case if Isaac was born without a promise of being the one to carry on Abraham’s name.

In other words, if God came to me today and asked me to sacrifice my son, that would be a test of obedience. I have no promises from God about my son. If He said to do it, it would be straight up obedience or disobedience.

However, if God promised to me that in 20 years, my son would be president of the United States and then **later** asked me to sacrifice him, that would be a test of faith, not obedience. The reason is that God cannot lie – and we know this from both the Bible and by simple logic.

It is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, if He asked me to sacrifice my son, having already told me that he would be the President, then I would have to have faith that my son would be resurrected. This is exactly what is happening here and it is proven true by Hebrews 11:17-19 –

“<sup>17</sup> By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*, <sup>18</sup> of whom it was said, “In Isaac your seed shall be called,” <sup>19</sup> concluding that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.”

I hope you’re seeing the difference between the two and also are thinking of how you can apply this to your own life. There are things that we need to be obedient about and there are things that simply require our faith. And then there are things that require our faith in order to be obedient.

The differences are important, and how we act, particularly in our faith in God and His promises is the most important aspect of our lives. If you

demonstrate the faith of Abraham, I assure you, your rewards will be great when you stand before the Lord.

**<sup>9</sup> Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood.**

The last verse of chapter 21 said this, “And Abraham stayed in the land of the Philistines many days.” This was at the time of Isaac’s weaning, meaning he was three years old. From that time, we’re told he lived “many days” in the land of the Philistines. However, the Bible doesn’t give us a specific amount of time. It could have been 10 years or 30 years.

The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus says Isaac is 25 years old now, other Jewish scholars say 36 years old. But the Bible doesn’t say. Christian scholars like to say he was 33 years old in order to fit the picture of Jesus. There is no need to do this though because, regardless of the age, the entire account already prefigures Jesus.

What God has hidden, we can speculate on, but it would be wrong to be dogmatic. One thing is for sure, he was old enough to carry the wood up the hill, and it would take a considerable amount of wood. No matter what, he would’ve been in his teens if not older.

The word used to designate him as a lad in English is the Hebrew word *na’ar* and is normally used about a younger man or someone in tenderness of age. Again, regardless of the age, he was at least old enough to put up a fight or run. This is the important thought we should keep in our mind.

Abraham is now 100 plus whatever age Isaac is. If Isaac is 15, Abraham is 115. He’s an old man and yet, the record stands that he built an altar, placed the wood in order, and he bound Isaac and then laid him on the altar. The entire act is based on two concepts, Abraham’s **faith** and Isaac’s **obedience**.

What we see in Isaac is what will later be seen in God’s own Son as recorded by Paul –

<sup>5</sup> Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, <sup>7</sup> but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross. Philippians 2:5-8

**<sup>10</sup> And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.**

The call was given, Abraham got up early – without delay and headed to Moriah. The hill was climbed on the third day, the altar was made ready, the wood was laid out, and the boy was bound and placed in the spot of execution. Every detail prefigures exactly what God was going to do 1800 years later through Jesus.

Abraham then is a type of God the Father and Isaac of God the Son. The minuteness of the details is given for you and me to see, contemplate, and believe. And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son...

By doing so, it was taken by God has a deed fulfilled. To Abraham, Isaac died three days earlier. He now is merely completing what has already been accomplished in his mind. Paul writes to us about the Jesus' fulfillment of this Old Testament shadow accomplished by Abraham –

<sup>31</sup> What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?  
Romans 8:31, 32

Abraham didn't spare his own son and neither did God. Abraham delivered his son up to God and God delivered His Son up for us, including Abraham. Because He did, how shall He not through Jesus freely give us all things, just as He now gives to Abraham...

**<sup>11</sup> But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” So he said, “Here I am.”**

At the moment of finality, comes the sound of relief. In what is almost an ironic occurrence, the Angel of the Lord, the divine Son of God who is being prefigured here, is the One who calls out for the sacrifice to be halted. The very same Lord, however, would receive in full what Isaac is spared from.

The great Mediator between God and man now steps in to fulfill that task of mediation for His beloved servant Abraham. And when He does so, He does it in a display of emotion found throughout the Bible. He calls His name twice – “Abraham, Abraham.”

This is the very first of several hundred such times where this is done. It’s a method of emphasis similar to us using an exclamation point or italicizing words in a sentence. In an amazing twist of things, Jesus, the Angel of the Lord here calls out “Abraham, Abraham” to save the son of promise who would lead to Him.

And yet from this son of promise would also come the Nation of Israel who would call out exactly the opposite in exactly the same spot 1800 years later. Luke 23 records their emphatic statement “Crucify, crucify!”

And as He hung alone on the cross, bearing the weight of the sins of the world, He called out to His own Father in fulfillment of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Psalm “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”

The Bible is so full of the amazing love of God and what He has done even for those who would raise their hands against His own Son. How can we not stand amazed and in awe of what He has done for each one of us!

**<sup>12</sup> And He said, “Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.”**

*Ki attah adati* – Now I know. *Ki y’ray elohim* – You fear God. God already knew as He knows everything, but in an act of judicial necessity because

God governs the world, and for the sake of man's conscience which needs to be instructed by both practice as well as principle, God tested Abraham.

What God knew, Abraham now knows by that principle as well as the practice. His faith has been tested and it has been found true. And therefore God tells him to not lay a hand on Isaac, or do anything to him.

There will be no sacrifice, no lighting of the wood, no prayers over the offering. Abraham is told to cease everything associated with this deed. The fear of God – a fear that can only come through faith is explained – “since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.”

What has happened here, as I alluded to already, is that Isaac is prefiguring Jesus' real sacrifice. Abraham yielded to God by yielding his son. Isaac yielded to God by yielding himself, and the picture of what God did in Jesus and what Jesus did for His Father is complete.

This act by the man of faith and by the son of promise is one of the Old Testament's most important accounts in understanding what God has done for us through Jesus. In the future, when you read this passage, I hope you will reflect not only on what Abraham did, but what God did in fulfillment of this picture.

Before we go on, I want you to again note the concept of Obedience vs. Faith. For Abraham, this has not been a test of obedience, but a test of faith which necessitated obedience. In the case of Isaac, it was a test of obedience which necessitated faith.

## **II. The Lord Will Provide**

**<sup>13</sup> Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind *him* was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son.**

In an amazingly beautiful picture of substitution, God provides a ram in place of Isaac. To understand this picture, you must now look in the mirror.

You see, it is you that deserves both the death and burning which Isaac was facing.

It is you who have sinned in thought, word, and deed before your Creator. And in fact, you have done it with laughing and without care. And as Isaac means “laughter,” this is a picture of you lying on the altar ready to receive your just fate from the God who is as angry at your sin as He is in love with who you *could be*.

And so in place of you... the one deserving death, God sent a substitute to take your place. Again, the picture only comes into focus when we understand other symbolism given in the Old Testament. In Leviticus 16, on the Day of Atonement where God covered the people’s sins, a ram was selected as a burnt offering.

This ram, along with other animals, was used as a picture of the work of Jesus. The ram was completely burned up as Isaac was supposed to be. This pictures the complete destruction of the one tainted with sin. In Isaac’s case, a ram is also given as a substitute.

This becomes even more beautiful to picture when we note that the very spot where Abraham is to offer his son is the same spot where the temple would be built by Solomon a thousand years later. And this is where those sacrifices of the law were made. But those sacrifices couldn’t truly save anything as Hebrews later explains.

And so to fulfill God’s plans and to complete the picture they made, God sent His Son, who did die, probably in the exact spot where the ram was that Abraham saw – and guess what! He was “caught in a thicket by his horns.”

This picture is complete when we remember that Jesus is the ram and that He wore a crown of thorns, probably made from a bush from the very same spot. It is probable that this bush is the Ziziphus spina-christi, The Christ’s Thorn, or the jujube tree.

It reaches twenty feet in height and is found growing all around the waysides of Jerusalem. The crooked branches of this shrub are armed with thorns growing in pairs, a straight spine and a curved one commonly occurring together at each point.

This ram, caught in the Christ's Thorn, became Isaac's substitute. And the true Lamb, caught in the same thorns – woven as a crown on His head – in the very same location 1800 years later became our Substitute. A whole burnt offering to God, as Paul explains –

And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. Ephesians 5:2

And before we move on, we should note how the author of Hebrews explains the sacrifice of Christ –

Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. <sup>6</sup> In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin You had no pleasure. <sup>7</sup> Then I said, 'Behold, I have come—In the volume of the book it is written of Me—To do Your will, O God.'" <sup>8</sup> Previously saying, "Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and *offerings* for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure *in them*" (which are offered according to the law), <sup>9</sup> then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God." He takes away the first that He may establish the second. <sup>10</sup> By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*.

**<sup>14</sup> And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, "In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided."**

After I met the Lord, I made a cross and signs to put on the cross for each day leading up to Easter. I put it out front of my house for the entire Passion Week. The first sign of the week has this verse on it. "On the Mountain of the Lord is will be provided." I've put that cross and sign out each year since then.



I chose this verse because, from the first times that I read Genesis, I understood what this verse was saying and Abraham did too. He looked behind him and saw a ram caught in a thicket. But what he saw with his physical eyes was less wonderful than what he saw with his spiritual eyes.

Abraham looked into the future and saw the mystery he had wondered about from his first call into the Promised Land and through every promise of God since then. He saw Christ, our Substitute and he noted where Christ's work would be accomplished. He saw the cross and He saw the resurrection.

The mystery revealed before His eyes was more wonderful than the thought of not losing Isaac. Having Isaac for a few more years of his life was inconsequential to having Isaac for all eternity. And that could only happen one way. Abraham saw the Lord on His cross and called the place Y'hovah Yireh – The Lord Sees.

And because of this, from that time on the saying became known – “On the Mountain of the Lord He will appear.” Because of the type of verb used, known as a Niphal, it doesn't mean “provide” but rather “appear.” This verse is speaking specifically about the manifestation of Jehovah in the flesh – Jesus Christ.

And this is what Paul speaks of in his first letter to Timothy –

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory. (3:16)

### **III. Only After the Substitute...**

**<sup>15</sup> Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven,**

I didn't find any commentary that noted why the Lord waited until after the ram was offered to call a second time out of heaven, but it seems pretty

clear. It is a picture of our salvation. God calls all men to Himself through Jesus Christ. It is His way of speaking to us – by the offering of His Son.

The Ram is there, but we must accept His work as our Substitute. God only calls the second time **after** we accept Him as Lord and Savior. Only after receiving this Substitute can we expect what comes after the Substitute.

God doesn't demand any of us to make a human sacrifice, but rather the acceptance of His offering – a spiritual sacrifice which really occurred in His own Son. This equates to an unconditional denial of our ability to save ourselves. We must die to sin through Jesus – the Substitute God offers.

We are saved and then we receive the promised blessings – not before. The Lord calls a second time out of heaven “the substitute is satisfactory and thus I will bless you.”

**<sup>16</sup> and said: “By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son—**

Earlier I said that it was Jehovah who called out to Abraham. This verse confirms that. The Angel of the Lord is the Lord and He has sworn by Himself. His oath is explained in detail in Hebrews 10 and cannot be passed over –

<sup>13</sup> For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, <sup>14</sup> saying, “Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.” <sup>15</sup> And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. <sup>16</sup> For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation *is* for them an end of all dispute. <sup>17</sup> Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath, <sup>18</sup> that by two immutable things, in which it *is* impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before *us*. Heb 6:13-18

It must be noted also that the Lord swearing by Himself never occurs again in this manner and so, time and again, we will see repeated references to

this very oath by Abraham, by Isaac, by Joseph, by Moses, by David and others in the Psalms, by Zechariah the father of John the Baptist, and even by the Lord Himself.

This verse then is a defining moment in the history of humanity, in the history of the Bible, and in our understanding of the nature of God. (Ge 24:7; 26:3; 50:24; Ex 13:5, 13:11; 33:1, Ps 89:36; 132:11; 110:4, Luke 1:73)

**<sup>17</sup> blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore;**

The Lord, in swearing this oath upon Himself, uses repetition in a way which shows us that the nations of the earth will willingly come to be blessed through Abraham. It is as if they will rush forward en masse to join to the blessings he has promised; blessings which come through faith in his Seed – the Messiah.

And the number of them will be astonishing. So much so that the Lord uses two terms to describe it, as the stars of the heaven and as the sand at the lip of the sea, where the waves rush in – bringing even more sand to fill its shores. This is a combination of the promises of Genesis 13:16 – dust of earth and 15:5 – stars.

**<sup>17 (cont)</sup> and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.**

The gate of the enemies includes all of their strength – troops, advisors, weapons, and fortifications. This is ultimately fulfilled not just physically by the conquest of Canaan, but spiritually by Christ and His church as He states in Matthew 16 –

<sup>18</sup> And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. <sup>19</sup> And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

Gates are defensive, not offensive. What the Lord promises to Abraham and what Jesus promises to us is complete victory over the enemies of God and God's people.

**<sup>18</sup> In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."**

In a previous sermon, we saw that the Seed He is referring to here is Himself – His incarnation in the Person of Jesus. Paul explains it in Galatians 3 in relation to the Law of Moses –

<sup>16</sup> Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ. <sup>17</sup> And this I say, *that* the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. <sup>18</sup> For if the inheritance *is* of the law, *it is* no longer of promise; but God gave *it* to Abraham by promise.

The promise came before the law. God has promised through the Seed to bless all the nations of the earth apart from the Law. The only way this is possible is for the Law to be fulfilled on our behalf and thus it required the work of a Man born free of sin and who would also fulfill the Law without sinning; the Seed is Jesus.

**<sup>19</sup> So Abraham returned to his young men, and they rose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.**

The greatest test of faith recorded in the entire Old Testament is over. Abraham has been given the crown of righteousness and the garments of white. He has proven faithful and God has favored him in a way not seen again in the pages of the Bible.

From this foundational account God's plan of redemption continues, and yet the story for today ends quietly. He returned to the servants at the foot of Mount Moriah and together they return to Beersheba, the Well of the Seven. But even this pictures the work of the Lord.

Jesus also prevailed over His own trial of Moriah and after doing so, He returned to the Well of the Seven. In His eternal state, there are seven aspects of the Lord. Isaiah notes them and they are referred to again in the book of Revelation –

<sup>1</sup> There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse,  
And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.

<sup>2</sup> The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him,  
The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
The Spirit of counsel and might,  
The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.

<sup>3</sup> His delight *is* in the fear of the LORD,  
And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes,  
Nor decide by the hearing of His ears;

<sup>4</sup> But with righteousness He shall judge the poor,  
And decide with equity for the meek of the earth;  
He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,  
And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.

<sup>5</sup> Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins,  
And faithfulness the belt of His waist. (Isaiah 11:1-5)

Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, <sup>5</sup> and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. (Rev 1:4, 5)

Even in his return to Beersheba, the Well of the Seven, this man of faith continues to prefigure the Lord of all creation.

#### **IV. The Funnel Continues**

I've talked about God's Funnel in the past. It is the chosen line of God's work in and through humanity – from Adam through Seth to Noah, to Shem, to Abraham, and now to Isaac. But Isaac will someday need a wife. And so at the end of this most important of chapters there is post-fixed a curious set of verses that makes many wonder why are they there...

**<sup>20</sup> Now it came to pass after these things that it was told Abraham, saying, “Indeed Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor:**

**<sup>21</sup> Huz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram,**

**<sup>22</sup> Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel.”**

**<sup>23</sup> And Bethuel begot Rebekah. These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham’s brother.**

**<sup>24</sup> His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore Tebah, Gaham, Thahash, and Maachah.**

These 4 verses are given for two reasons. The first is to introduce Rebekah who will become Isaac’s wife. The mantle is being passed from Abraham to Isaac here. Abraham has accomplished his work before the Lord and the main focus of God’s funnel will now be directed toward Isaac.

The second reason is to give the historical names of some of these people who will come into contact with God’s people later in the Bible. Not all of them will be seen again, but those that will, can be traced back to these verses. In essence, it’s reminding us that we are all eventually related to each other if we go back far enough.

When we read the book of Job, we can come back here to see his family line; when we read about the Chaldeans in Isaiah or Daniel, we can find them here too. These and others who later become enemies or allies with the Israelites are all humans needing the same Savior that Abraham needed.

Next Week – Genesis 23:1-20 (The Death of the Princess)

### **The Lord Will Provide**

Then they came to the place of which God had told Him.  
And Abraham built an altar there where they stood  
He placed the wood in order, and bound Isaac limb by limb  
And laid him on the altar, there upon the wood  
And Abraham stretched out his hand and also took the knife  
To slay his son, his precious son born of Sarah his wife  
But the Angel of the Lord called from heaven to Abraham

And said "Abraham, Abraham" in a resounding voice  
Abraham replied, "Yes Lord, here I am"  
"Do not lay your hand upon the lad, instead you can rejoice  
"Do not do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God  
Since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me  
Abraham lifted his eyes and looked and maybe he did applaud  
There was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns, you see

So Abraham went and took the ram and led it by his side  
And offered it, a burnt offering instead of his son  
And Abraham called the name of the place "The Lord Will Provide  
The test of Abraham's faith surely had been won  
And as it is said, even to this very day  
In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided  
Then the Angel of the Lord a second time out of heaven did say  
I have a decree, there is something firmly decided

By Myself I have sworn says the Lord  
Because you have done this thing  
And have not withheld your son, your only son by my word  
Blessing I will bless you – let the nations sing  
And multiplying I will multiply your descendants  
Even as the stars are numbered high in the heaven  
And as the sand which is on the seashore, ever so resplendent  
The world through your seed I will enliven

And your descendants shall possess their enemies' gate  
And throughout all ages, your name it shall be great  
So Abraham returned to his young men  
And they rose and together to Beersheba they went  
And Abraham dwelt at Beersheba from then  
And this is where, for a while, his time was spent

Now it came to pass after these things, not before  
That it was told Abraham, saying  
Indeed Milcah has born children to your brother Nahor  
For this you know they have been praying

Huz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram  
Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel, if girls they would make a  
harem

And Bethuel begot Rebekah

These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother

His concubine, whose name was Reumah,

Also bore Tebah, Gaham, Thahash, and Maachah – what a mother!

And so behind us is the story of Abraham and Isaac

Given to us to show the marvelous workings of the Lord

All contained in the Holy Bible – a beautiful almanac

Yes, for us to learn and love, His precious word

And what a word it is indeed!

May we learn it and also to it give our heed

For in this book is the story of God's Son

Who through His blood the victory is won

Hallelujah and Amen...