

ABRAHAM'S GREAT CRISIS

TEXT: GENESIS 22:1-24

INTRODUCTION:

1. Two of the most important chapters in the Bible are Genesis 22 and Psalm 22.
2. It's been said that whereas Psalm 22 shows us what Calvary meant to the Son of God – “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (22:1); Genesis 22 shows us what Calvary meant for God the Father (22:1, 2).
3. The sacrifice of Isaac by his father Abraham up on Mount Moriah is one of the greatest pictures in the Bible of God's plan of salvation.
4. Abraham was tested many times, but this was by far his greatest test, his most severe test, the ultimate test.
5. The story is both historical and typical. When we refer to types, we mean “a person, thing, or event in the Old Testament, designed to represent or prefigure some person, thing, or event in the New Testament” (Fred Hartley Wright, *Devotional Studies of Old Testament Types*).
6. In Genesis 22, the persons in the Old Testament, designed to represent or prefigure some persons in the New Testament, are Abraham and Isaac, prefiguring God offering up His only begotten Son on the cross.
7. Hebrews 11:17—19 says, “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son. Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.”
8. The word translated “figure” in Hebrews 11:19 literally means “parable” or “type.”
9. Typical interpretation does not disregard the literal meaning of the story. Typical interpretation recognizes that the events are factual, but sees the spiritual meaning behind the story.

10. It is significant that Hebrews 11:17 refers to Isaac as Abraham's "only begotten son" (cf. John 3:16).

I. THE SUPREME TEST

II. THE SUPREME TRUST

III. THE SUPREME TRUTH

I. THE SUPREME TEST

1. Genesis 22 begins with these words, "And it came to pass after these things..."(22:1; cf. 22:20). The LORD had just revealed Himself to Abraham as "the everlasting God" (21:33).
2. And "after these things," God tested Abraham. "Tempt" here in Genesis 22:1 means, "to test, to try, to prove, to put to the test" (cf. Genesis 22:2).
3. "God tests us to bring out the good, but Satan tempts us to bring out the evil" (W.H. Griffith Thomas).
4. This word is usually translated "prove" in our King James Bible.
5. After God gave the Ten Commandments, there were thunder and lightning, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, "and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off"(Exodus 20:18).
6. And the people said to Moses, "Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die" (Exodus 20:19).
7. "And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not" (Exodus 20:20).
8. The same word is translated "try" in II Chronicles 32:31, where it refers to God testing King Hezekiah – "God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart."
9. David prayed, "Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart" (Psalm 26:2).
10. God tested Abraham. You could say it was examination time, and Abraham passed with flying colors (22:10-14).

11. The LORD had been preparing Abraham for this exam for a long time. Abraham was repeatedly tested – he had to leave Ur of the Chaldees; he had to separate from his nephew Lot; he had to rescue Lot when Lot was taken captive; he had to deal with all the strife caused by Sarah and Hagar and Ishmael, etc.
12. Testing and discipline are a necessary part of the Christian life because they prove whether or not we really do have true Christian character.
13. Abraham was familiar with human sacrifices, because the offering of human sacrifices was a common practice among the heathen in Abraham's time.
14. However, human sacrifices were strongly condemned by God, and the Israelites were to totally abstain from all the wicked practices of their heathen neighbors.
15. There is no other incident in the Bible where God tested a believer in this particular way.
16. Deuteronomy 18:10-12 says, “There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD.”
17. But with Abraham, God chose this dreadful test to prove whom Abraham loved most – God or his son Isaac.
18. God knows the end from the beginning, and God never intended to have Isaac sacrificed. One preacher put it this way – “What God desired was not Isaac’s life but Abraham’s loyalty” (W.H. Griffith Thomas, *Genesis*).
19. After the supreme test, we see the supreme trust.

II. THE SUPREME TRUST (22:3)

1. Genesis 22:3 says, "And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son..."
2. In Abraham's response there was no reluctance; there was no hesitation; there were no doubts; no questioning; no unbelief.
3. Abraham did not delay. He did not try to reason things out. He did not try consulting with other people about the matter and getting their advice.
4. Abraham trusted God. He believed God. Before Isaac was born, God had already told Abraham that his seed would be as the dust of the earth, and

as innumerable as the stars in the sky and the sand which is upon the sea shore (cf. 13:16; 15:5, 6; 22:17).

5. Before Isaac was born, God said, “But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year” (Genesis 17:21).
6. So if the covenant was to be established with Isaac, and Isaac’s seed would be as the dust of the earth, and as innumerable as the stars in the sky and the sand which is upon the sea shore, and Isaac was still a young lad, unmarried with no children...how could he die up on Mount Moriah? (cf. Hebrews 11:19).
7. Abraham believed that even if Isaac were to die, “God was able to raise him up, even from the dead” (Heb. 11:19).
8. “For in Isaac shall thy seed be called” (Genesis 21:12b). God said it and Abraham believed God.
9. That is why Abraham said to his young men, “Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you” (Genesis 22:5). Literally, “we will come again to you.”
10. What makes this all the more remarkable is the fact that Abraham had never heard of anyone being raised from the dead before.
11. Elijah the prophet raised a man from the dead – the son of the widow woman in Zarepath, but that was a thousand years after Abraham.
12. Elisha the prophet raised the son of the Shunammite woman from the dead, but that also took place a thousand years later.
13. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, but that was two thousand years later.
14. And of course, there was the greatest resurrection of all, which took place on that first Resurrection Sunday!

*Up from the grave He arose,
With a mighty triumph o’er His foes,
He arose a Victor from the dark domain,
And He lives forever, with His saints to reign.
He arose! He arose!
Hallelujah! Christ arose! – Robert Lowry.*

15. In this amazing story recorded in Genesis 22, Isaac is a picture and type of Christ. Isaac did not have to be dragged up to Mount Moriah. He did not attempt to run away. “They went both of them together” (22:6b; 28b).

16. In like manner, our Lord went willingly up Mount Calvary. Philippians 2:8 says, "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."
17. Isaac submitted himself to his father Abraham because God had so willed it. In this Isaac prefigured the Lord Jesus Christ, who prayed at Gethsemane, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39).
18. In that great Messianic Psalm, we read, "I delight to do thy will, O my God" (Psalm 40:8; cf. Hebrews 10:7).
19. Abraham told the young men, "I and the lad will go yonder and worship." It was a true act of worship because Abraham had given up all of his desires and had yielded everything to God.
20. Abraham was prepared to give God his very best. Abraham was willing to give up everything for God. Christians often sing:

*All to Jesus, I surrender;
All to Him I freely give;
I will ever love and trust Him,
In His presence daily live.*

*I surrender all, I surrender all,
All to Thee, my blessèd Savior,
I surrender all.*

*All to Jesus I surrender;
Humbly at His feet I bow,
Worldly pleasures all forsaken;
Take me, Jesus, take me now.*

*All to Jesus, I surrender;
Make me, Savior, wholly Thine;
Let me feel the Holy Spirit,
Truly know that Thou art mine.*

*All to Jesus, I surrender;
Lord, I give myself to Thee;
Fill me with Thy love and power;
Let Thy blessing fall on me.*

21. Abraham could sing that hymn and mean every word of it. Isaac meant everything to him, but nevertheless Abraham trusted God, and said to Isaac, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering" (22:8).

III. THE SUPREME TRUTH (22:9-12)

1. Abraham trusted God. A person who trusts God fears God. Proverbs 14:26 says, "In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence (trust)."
2. Faith is always proved by obedience (cf. 22:18). There is something very questionable about a person who claims to be a Christian, but does not obey God.
3. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).
4. Abraham obeyed God, even though God's command was very difficult. Works are evidence of genuine faith.
5. James 2:21-23 says, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God."
6. Abraham was not saved by his works. James 2:23 says, "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness."
7. When Abraham went up on Mount Moriah with his son Isaac, it proved that he had true faith in God (22:11-13).
8. Abraham's faith was tested up on Mount Moriah and he passed the test.
9. "The angel of the LORD" (22:11, 15) is the pre-incarnate Christ.
10. Genesis 22:16 says, "By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD."
11. Because there is no one greater, God can swear by no one greater than Himself (22:16).
12. The LORD said, "Because thou hast done this thing..." (22:16). Abraham did not sacrifice Isaac, but because he obeyed God and was willing, God said, "Because thou hast done this thing..."
13. God regarded the sacrifice as actually offered. "The will was taken for the deed" (Griffith Thomas).
14. Once again, the LORD told Abraham that He would bless him and multiply his seed as the stars of heaven and as the sand on the seashore (22:16-18).

15. I said earlier that this story is both historical and typical. In Genesis 22:8, Abraham said, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering."
16. When we come to the New Testament, John the Baptist introduced the Lord Jesus Christ by saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"(John 1:29, 36).
17. When Abraham stretched forth his hand, and lifted up his knife, the angel of the LORD called to him out of heaven, and told him to stop.
18. "And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son" (22:13).
19. This illustrates the doctrine of substitutionary atonement. It was foreseen by God that the ram would be there, "caught in a thicket by his horns."
20. Genesis 22:14 says, "And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh." The name means, "The LORD will provide" (cf. 22:8). God provided the ram. This was all foreseen by God.
21. "Jehovah-jireh" was the name memorialized by Abraham when God provided the ram to be sacrificed in place of Isaac.
22. The LORD said, "Because thou hast done this thing..." (22:16)

CONCLUSION:

1. Mount Moriah is only mentioned twice in the Bible.
2. The second reference is in II Chronicles 3:1, where it says, "Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the Lord appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite."
3. Mount Moriah was the sacred place where the temple was built.
4. Mount Moriah is one of the mountains on which the city of Jerusalem was built, identifying Mount Moriah with Mount Calvary.
5. I will conclude with the words to that familiar hymn...

*And when I think that God, his Son not sparing,
Sent him to die, I scarce can take it in,
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin.*

*Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee:
How great thou art! How great thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee:
How great thou art! How great thou art!* (Carl G. Boberg; translated by Stuart K. Hine)