

Abraham 11 -The Sacrifice

We have watched as Abraham has come closer and closer to the greatest thing one could have in his day. He finally had a son who would carry the family on. Now, with the culmination of his entire walk with God and just as he arrived at the pinnacle of his life, it looks like God is going to require something of him that would undo all of what He had promised and provided. Abraham will be required to sacrifice his son which presented, for a time, one of the greatest paradoxes of Scripture: Abraham's obedience to sacrifice his son *seems* to go against God's nature. This paradox becomes resolved in Christ, the seed of Abraham, who is indeed sacrificed for man.

1. God's command.

Gen 22:1-2 And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, *here I am*.

2And he said, Take now thy son, thine only *son* Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

As many preachers have said, Genesis 22 ranks among the highest chapters in the Bible. We see in this chapter the greatest love for God, the greatest denial of self, the greatest soul anguish, the greatest obedience, and the greatest picture of salvation. This picture of salvation is rich in detail and doctrine. Taken by itself and not in the context of God's ultimate plan, it is absolutely bizarre. It is only in the context as a prophecy of the crucifixion of Christ that this event makes any real sense.

If the sacrifice of Isaac is only a testament to Abraham's selflessness, then it is trivial. Abraham had already sacrificed much by leaving Ur of the Chaldees, giving up the best land to Lot, attacking seven kings, and giving up Ishmael. If it is only about Abraham's selflessness, then it almost looks like God is toying with him. It would be like God saying, "Now let's see what *else* we can do to Abraham. What can we think of next?" The only way that this can have any sense of significance is if

there is some supreme purpose for it to serve. This is so even in the case of the normal animal sacrifices.

If there was some way that animal sacrifices were reinstated today, that would be a shock to our sensibilities. The shock to our system would serve to help us realize how bad sin is that it should require a blood sacrifice. Even though people will quickly acknowledge their sinfulness intellectually, they don't usually comprehend the magnitude of it. The idea of seeing an animal sacrificed should serve to shock us into the reality of how sinful we are that such a thing should be required. It really shouldn't be such a large reach to realize that not even an animal sacrifice is sufficient. The next greater step would be the requirement of a life for a life. But, even that would be insufficient. The sacrifice of Isaac set us up for the only thing that would be sufficient for our sins which is the sacrifice of the Son of God himself. An animal sacrifice, though it could not take away sin, was chosen as a response to our sin. The sacrifice of Abraham's son would be exponentially greater than that of an animal. The sacrifice of *God's* Son is not just exponentially but infinitely greater than the sacrifice of Abraham's son.

2. Abraham's anguish.

Gen 22:3-6 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, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

4Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

5And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

6And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid *it* upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

If Abraham had been asked to die

himself that his son might be spared, it would have been easy for him. It is hard enough to have to watch our sons go off to war, but at least they would be able to say that their sons had died for a great cause. But here, Abraham is not only required to sacrifice his son with no expressed higher benefit, but that Abraham must be the one to sacrifice him. You have to wonder what was going through his head at this time. He had plenty of time to be tortured with the thought of this. This was no flippant measure that he was taking. That God would ask him this seemed so contradictory to everything God is known for. Could he have wondered if it was a demon talking to him? He might have wondered if he had slipped over into merely being a zealot. Perhaps he had gotten carried away with his own pride in his own ability to sacrifice all. Perhaps he had merely gone crazy and was hearing voices. It is only recorded that Abraham had faith and a fear of God, but the depth of that fear of God was made real when it was put to the test and no longer just theory.

3. The greatest sacrifice.

We look at the sacrifice that Abraham was about to make, but we might miss what is possibly the even *greater* sacrifice that Isaac was *about* to make. He asked Abraham where the sacrifice was. When Abraham moved to bind him to the altar, we do not see him fighting in resistance. There is reason to believe that Isaac was as old as 30. We can be sure that he was not a small child because of his willful response and that he had been strong enough to carry the wood for the sacrifice. Isaac was obedient to his father and here is where the final significance of the sacrifice is revealed. It is not merely a picture of selflessness, it is a greater sacrifice because it is a picture of the Christ's obedience unto death in His sacrifice that was to come.

Gen 22:7-14 And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here *am* I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering?

8And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of

them together. **[This is the essence of the prophetic picture. The way this is structured indicates both of two possibilities: God will provide *for* Himself a sacrifice and God will provide Himself *as* a sacrifice.]**

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

10And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

11And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here *am* I.

12And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only *son* from me.

13And 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.

14And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said *to* this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.

This verse is so filled with meaning. The angel of the Lord says, "Now I know." It is interesting that in Hebrew and when ancient translators wrote the "I know" is in a past tense. It is translated in the present tense because of the indication that it is "now" that it is known. This is similar to when God called out to Adam, "Where art thou?" God knew where Adam was then and God knew Abraham's heart now because God knows all things. What God is talking about is a different kind of knowing. He "was" knowing Abraham rationally because He knew his heart. *Now* Abraham is known *experientially* by his action. This is what Jesus meant in the phrase "wisdom is justified of her children." We know certain things by our wisdom but the demonstration of that

wisdom follows. This is what James referred to when he says that Abraham was justified by works.

Jas 2:21-22 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

22Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

Abraham had been justified by faith some forty years earlier and that without the works of circumcision or sacrifice. Now, his faith came to full maturity producing this work which was the *fruit* of his faith.

Gen 22:15-19 And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,

16And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only *son*:

17That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which *is* upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

18And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

19So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.

Here then is the great picture of Jesus Christ.

- Isaac was the son of Abraham's old age
- In Isaac was the seed of Abraham called
- Isaac was to be offered on Mt. Moriah
- Isaac was the son whom Abraham loved
- Isaac was received on the third day
- Only Abraham and Isaac were present at the sacrifice

- Isaac was to be pierced and consumed by fire
- Isaac bore the wood for his sacrifice
- Isaac was obedient unto death
- Isaac was bound for the sacrifice
- Abraham was the one who would bring judgment on Isaac
- A lamb was to be slain prophetically, a ram was given at that moment
- The Seed of Abraham *was* slain

It is concluded that in the seed of Abraham all the world would be blessed. In Jesus Christ, the seed of Abraham, all the world *has* been blessed.

After considering all that Abraham was faced with, there was one thing that was able to carry him through it all which we also have available to us today: the confidence of the resurrection.

Heb 11:17-19 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*,
 18Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:
 19Accounting that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

4. Here am I.

An alternate arrangement for presenting this Scripture might be titled, "Here am I."

- When God called out to Abraham to sacrifice his son, he replied, "Here am I."
- When Isaac called out to his father about the sacrifice, he replied, "Here am I."
- When the angel of the Lord called out to Abraham to stop he replied, "Here am I."

When God calls out to us, our response

should be "Here am I." When the world needs a missionary, our response should be "Here am I." When a child needs a word from God, our response should be "Here am I." When a brother or sister needs a word of encouragement or challenge, our response should be "Here am I." When someone needs you to sit down and pray with them or eat with them or listen to them, our response should be "Here am I." This might require some sacrifice, but our response should be "Here am I."

1. God's command. Gen 22:1-2
2. Abraham's anguish. Gen 22:3-6
3. The greatest sacrifice. Gen 22:7-14, Jas 2:21-22, Gen 22:15-19, Heb 11:17-19
4. Here am I.