

PASSING THE TEST Sunday School- December 18, 2011

Unifying Topic: THE LORD PROVIDES

Lesson Text

I. Abraham's Sacrifice (Genesis 22:1-2)

II. The Substitute (Genesis 22:6-14)

The Main Thought: And 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. (Genesis 22:12, KJV).

Unifying Principle: Sometimes people's faith may be tested by others with demands to do things they could not normally imagine doing. Does faith require doing anything and everything requested? Abraham was unquestioning in his faith and devotion to God, who eventually rescinded his demand to kill Isaac.

Lesson Aim: To retell the story of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his one and only son in order to obey God.

Life aim: To encourage students to reflect honestly on the boundaries they place on their devotion and faith. Abraham gave his all and so should every believer.

22:1 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.

22:2 And 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.

22:6 And 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.

22:7 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?

22:8 And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

22:9 And 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.

22:10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

22:11 And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.

22:12 And 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.

22:13 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.

22:14 And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.

HISTORY:

In **Chapter 17**, God changes Abram's name (*Exalted Father*) to Abraham (*Father of Nations*).

In **Chapter 21**, Abraham and Sarah finally have the son the LORD has been promising them, and they name their son Isaac, as they were told to do. Abraham is 100 and Sarah is 99 when Isaac is born. ¹Unfortunately, once Isaac is born, Sarah catches Ishmael "mocking." Sarah asks Abraham to get rid of Hagar ("that slave woman" (V10) and Ishmael. She doesn't want Ishmael sharing in Isaac's inheritance. This distresses Abraham, because Ishmael is still his son. As the LORD has already told Abraham, it's through Isaac that his offspring will be reckoned, not through Ishmael. Plus, the LORD tells Abraham that He will still make Ishmael into a nation in his own right, because he is Abraham's son.

So, the next morning—no time wasted there—Abraham gives Hagar and Ishmael some food and water, and sends them away. They end up wandering in the desert, until the water runs out, and then Hagar leaves Ishmael under a bush to die, and goes a distance away, because she can't bear to watch. But God hears the boy crying, and sends an angel to Hagar. He tells her not to worry, and that God is going to make Ishmael into a great nation. Then God opens her eyes, and she sees a well of water. Verses 20–21 tell us that Hagar and Ishmael continue to live in the desert, while Ishmael grows up, and his mother later goes to Egypt to bring him back a wife.

The end of the chapter (verses 22–34) recounts a treaty between Abraham and Abimelech, the king of the region where Abraham is living. The king has seen that God is with Abraham in everything that he does, so he wants to sign a treaty with Abraham stating that Abraham "will not deal falsely with [the king] or [his] children or [his] descendants" (verse 23) Abraham then brings up a well that he has dug, that Abimelech's men have siezed, and they swear an oath saying that the well belongs to Abraham.

¹ <http://sernabibleblog.blogspot.com/2006/07/genesis-21.html>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

The oath that they swear involves some kind of ceremony involving sheep, cattle, and seven ewe lambs, so the place where they swore it was called "Beersheba", which can mean "well of seven" or "well of the oath".

LESSON:

Genesis 22:1-2 Abraham's Sacrifice

22:1 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. We have these same words again, "after these things." What things you say? – All the things that had occurred earlier. The word "*tempt*" here means proved or tested; because God does not tempt anyone with evil (Jam.1:13). Abraham's trust and faith in God was tested. God gave many tests:

1. First, was the family test, when he had to leave his loved ones and step out by faith to go to a new land (11:27—12:5).
2. This was followed by the famine test, which Abraham failed because he doubted God and went down to Egypt for help (12:10—13:4).
3. Once back in the land, Abraham passed the fellowship test when he gave Lot first choice in using the pastureland (13:5-18).
4. He also passed the fight test when he defeated the kings (14:1-16).
5. The fortune test when he said no to Sodom's wealth (14:17-24).
6. But he failed the fatherhood test when Sarah got impatient with God and suggested that Abraham have a child by Hagar (16).
7. When the time came to send Ishmael away, Abraham passed the farewell test even though it broke his heart (21:14-21).

Learn to distinguish between trials and temptations.

- Temptations come from our desires within us (Jam.1:12-16) while trials come from the Lord who has a special purpose to fulfill.
- Temptations are used by the devil to bring out the worst in us, but trials are used by the Holy Spirit to bring out the best in us (vv1-6).
- Temptations seem logical while trials seem very unreasonable. Why would God give Abraham a son and then ask Abraham to kill him?

God calls Abraham's name and Abraham answer, "*Behold, here I am.*"

22:2 And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, In this new call, God called him to a new test and this was concerning his son. He had had many tests, but not like this one. In this one, three commands were before him.

1. Take your son, your only son, your beloved Isaac, and

This was the sacrifice test of faith and obedience. Obviously, Isaac was not Abraham's only son as Isaac did. However, a man's offspring by a slave woman was not ordinarily given the rights that belonged to the son born of his wife. Only if in the course of his lifetime the father had said to the male offspring of his slave woman (in public and in an official manner), "*Thou art my son,*" would the slave woman's offspring be treated as a real son of the father. If so, then he was counted as an heir; if not, he was given gifts and separated from the household before the inheritance was divided. Isaac remained Abraham's only son in the legal sense; though he had several other offspring (25:1-4), he had only one son in the unique sense, and he gave him his entire inheritance (25:5-6). Isaac was his unique son; and when the New Testament refers to Isaac (Heb.11:17), he's called his only begotten (*monogenēs*). It is clear that the expression "*only begotten*" refers to status. Thus, when Christ is referred to as the only begotten it is a reference to his status as the unique son of the Father; it does not signify that he had a beginning. This also clarifies **...whom thou lovest**, —This is Abraham's promised child from God and he loved him very much. For twenty years of blessing and happiness, Isaac has been the delight of his parents' hearts. The next command, **22:2b...and get thee into the land of Moriah; —**

2. Go to the land of Moriah where you are to...

Now, Mt. Moriah later called Judah would become the site of the temple (2Chro.3:1). Today there stands in that very place the Dome of the Rock, a Moslem mosque, built over the great rock that formed the altar upon which Abraham offered Isaac. In the New Testament, Calvary was identified with this site. This identification, along with the three days that Abraham traveled, suggests that this scene is a typology of God's sacrifice of His own Son. The promised seed had to be sacrificed; had to be put to the test by the one that loved him. The third command:

3. Offer him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains which I shall point out to you

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22:2c...and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. This was the son for whom Abraham had waited a lifetime and whom he loved above all others, he was to be given up to God as a childless burnt offering. This was a startling command by God to Abraham. This would mean killing the son and ending the promise of the Abrahamic Covenant. Abraham was stretched yet he walked by faith.

- Abraham would make the supreme sacrifice.
- Abraham would surrender his heart, will, and his spirit to God.

NOT APART OF THE LESSON:

SUMMARY: Chapter 22:3-5 — When morning comes Abraham and Isaac get up early. He takes Isaac, the wood for the fire, a donkey, and two of his servants which would take three days to get to a place God had spoken of. On the third day Abraham sees the place far off. He tells his servants to stay and wait with the donkeys while he and his son go to worship and will come back again. There are a number of symbolisms we need to see in this Scripture:

²

God sacrificing His only son.	Abraham sacrificing his son.
Jesus rode into Jerusalem on an ass.	The provisions for this sacrifice were carried on an ass.
Jesus died between two men on the cross.	Abraham took two men with them.
Jesus carried a wooden cross.	Isaac carried wood for the sacrifice. (wood means worldliness).
Jesus went to Golgotha on orders from God.	Abraham and Isaac went to Moriah in Jerusalem on orders from God.
Jesus obeyed His Father and said "nevertheless not my will, but thine."	Isaac obeyed Abraham without question.

³Note the repetition of threes in chapter 22:

- 3 commands (Gen 22:2)
- 3 day journey (Gen 22:4)
- 3 people accompanied Abraham: Isaac and two servants (Gen 22:3)
- Abraham carried 3 items: the wood, the fire, and the knife (Gen 22:6)
- The repeat of the 3-fold blessing (Gen 22:17-18)
- "Only son" repeated three times (Gen 22:2, 12, 16)
- "will provide" = yireh repeated three times (Gen 22:8, 14, (twice))
 - ⁴Abraham is trusting God, even when he does not understand.
 - He didn't debate or seek counsel from others.
 - Abraham is trusting, even when he does not feel like it.

While Abraham and Isaac were not going to the mount to have a time of joyful praise, they were going to bow down to the Lord. He said that he and Isaac would go there to worship and return again. Abraham's trust in God had grown so much that he thought God would provide a substitute or that God would resurrect Isaac. Anyway, Abraham simply took God at His Word. As Abraham laid down his head each of those nights as they traveled, he must have remembered the covenant which God had repeatedly affirmed to him. You have to keep the picture before you.

BACK TO THE LESSON

Genesis 22:6-14 The Substitute

22:6 And 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; Abraham and Isaac had a tender walk together up to the top of the mountain. Abraham was bound to be hurting, his heart suffering a piercing pain as though a knife had been thrust into his soul. Isaac's carrying the wood was a type of Christ, who carried his own cross, while Abraham, with a steady and undaunted resolution, carried the fatal knife and fire. The fire here speaks of judgment, and the knife speaks of the execution of judgment and of sacrifice." The parallel is very similar to the ordeal God the Father must have endured as Jesus headed to Calvary and His three days and nights in the grave. Isaac, the son of promise willingly bore the burden of the wood upon himself even as Jesus would bear the burden of our sin upon Himself. The wood was laid upon them for God's purpose. **...and they went both of them together.** Abraham and Isaac both went together with a singleness of purpose between a father and a son. ⁵It is interesting to note that the only ones who would see what would happen upon that mountain would be Abraham and Isaac, father and son - much like what happened on

² <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/Genesis/32.html>

³ http://www.agapebiblestudy.com/genesis/Lesson_11.htm

⁴ <http://www.studyLight.org/com/guz/view.cgi?book=ge&chapter=022>

⁵ <http://www.earnestlycontending.com/ewministries/jerry/genesis22.html>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

Calvary that day, when darkness for three hours hid the eyes of prying men from the Saviour who bore the sins of the world and God's wrath upon that cross (See Matthew 27:45-46). Now everything was ready!

22:7 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? A very touching scene: Isaac says, "My father"; Abraham replies, "my son." It's a very different scene on the cross when Jesus cried out to His Father. As they go on their way, Isaac notices that they don't have an animal for the sacrifice. He says, "Here is the fire and wood, but where is the lamb?" He couldn't understand that having taken no sacrifice with them how would they offer burnt offerings. ⁶"Where is the lamb?" continued to be asked for hundreds of years by various prophets and hopeful people until the day dawned when a Man from Galilee came to the lower end of the Jordan River to be baptized by a prophet who had been turning the countryside upside down. The prophet's name was John, The Baptist. Do you remember John the Baptist's words? Do you remember what he said when he saw Jesus? John 1:29 tells us. He said, "Look! [THERE is] the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world!"

22:8 And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: Abraham believed with the same unshakable faith that God would provide Himself a lamb. God did provide a substitute animal for Abraham's offering, but it was a ram, not a lamb. The lamb that God would ultimately provide as an offering for Himself would be Jesus the Messiah, the pure and spotless lamb who takes away the sins of the world. **...so they went both of them together.** There was no division among Isaac or Abraham. They both walked together as one. At each step, Abraham and Isaac were together, both physically and purposefully in what they were doing.

22:9 And 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. They traveled from Beersheba to Mt. Moriah up to the place God had specified to Abraham.

1. The place was reached, the altar built, and the wood arranged.
2. At last there was nothing left but to bind Isaac and place him upon the wood and plunge the knife into his heart. Isaac willingly let his father bind and offer him. He certainly was not eager to die, but he submitted to Abraham's will and thus to God's will. Much like our Saviour came down from Heaven, and willingly laid down His life to save us.

Have you offered up your life as a sacrifice to God? Have you made the absolute surrender of your life to God?

22:10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. As said in verse 8, Abraham and Isaac were together, both physically and purposefully, until now. ⁷It was only at the end when Abraham bound Isaac to the altar and drew his knife that Isaac would have felt separated and unsure of what his father was doing. This again is a key pointer to the Father's presence with Jesus as He went to the cross. The Father had been with Jesus His whole life and never had they been separated. Yet we read that while on the cross, as the sins of the world were placed upon Jesus, He cried out '*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*' Like Isaac, Jesus was suddenly unsure of the purpose of His Father (*but nevertheless*). But the victory was won on the cross and the presence of His Father was restored to Jesus as we see Him cry out a final time before dying, '*Father into your hands I commit my spirit.*' Perhaps the Lord asked more of Abraham than He had ever asked of any man. But it all came together when Abraham took the knife, his surrender was complete.

22:11 And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. God already knew what Abraham would do before he did it; He just wants Abraham as well as us to know! The test of all tests was displayed by a mortal man. From heaven the angel of the Lord called; calling his name twice. In verse 1, God called his name once, but here it's repeated, which denotes the urgency of the intervention. Abraham sounds pretty calm yet I know his heart was pounding, saying, "*Here am I.*" Somehow he knew the voice calling him right in the nick of time. He's heard it before; it brings relief!

22:12 And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: The very words Abraham had been wanting to hear for days was "*Lay not your hand upon the lad, neither do any thing to him.*" What sweet words that came from heaven. **22:12b ...for now I know that thou fearest God,** — Why didn't God know? He knows everything! The test was designed to see if Abraham would be obedient. You might be obedient in some things but not in another area; you might be obedient only when you feel like it; you might be obedient when it's convenient and conceivable for you. But the one you have to prove it to is God. You will no longer just be talking but it will be you acting on what you believe. You remember when Abraham and Sarah acted

⁶ <http://www.redlandbaptist.org/sermons/sermon20050710.php>

⁷ <http://jesusplusnothing.com/studies/online/jcabraham.htm>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

in disbelief by trying to get the promised seed through another way. God knows now that Abraham has learned his lesson. It will also show the world thereby others will see that he can pass the test. The fear that Abraham had was a reverential awe and respect for the God whom he knows that will keep His promises.**seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.** Even to the point of giving up his own son; his own flesh and blood, makes God know that Abraham fears and reverences Him. God makes Himself known to Abraham by using the words "I know" and "me." ⁸Abraham proved to himself and us how great his faith was, and how much he loved the Lord more than all else, including his beloved son of promise! Abraham obeyed God because of the love and fear (i.e. reverential awe and respect) he had for the Lord. The point is: God is after His people's heart and the surrender of one's spirit to be unto Him.

22:13 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. Abraham's focus was so intense and on point that he hadn't taken his eyes off of the assignment at hand, until the angel of the Lord's announcement from heaven came; then and only then, did he lift up his eyes. At this point he saw a ram, an offering for the sacrifice in which God had provided. You talk about on-time; now that's right on-time! ⁹This ram a substitute, its blood also had to be shed before it was burnt completely on the altar. All the Old Testament animal sacrifices - from those animals slain for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden to those Passover lambs being slain in the same day that Christ was crucified - and their shed blood (that provided an atonement - a covering for their souls, see Leviticus 17:11) pointed toward the great Sacrifice of Christ and the blood He shed on the cross of Calvary for the sins of the world. ¹⁰This is the greatest symbolism of Jesus' sacrifice of all. Jesus is our substitute. We should have suffered and died on that cross, but Jesus God's Son, took our place. He was our substitute and sacrificial covering for sin which He took completely away! God has always provided a substitute

22:14 And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen. ¹¹Jehovahjireh - the Lord my Provider! The name means literally, "The Lord Will See or Provide," signifying that the Lord has seen my need and will provide it. The Bible teaches that Jesus saw our greatest need: for salvation from sin and eternity in Hell, and provided for that need. Now all that trust in Him have the promise that as they walk with Him they will have all their other needs provided for as well:

SUMMARY:

God tells Abraham to sacrifice his only son Isaac; the son he loves; his promised son. Have you ever told yourself, this is only a test? Well, when you know that, it will take all within you to stand till it's worked out. Will we give up what we can't hold on to, to allow God to give us what we can't get without Him? The land of Moriah is where they are headed to offer burnt offerings. Isaac asks, "*Where is the lamb for the sacrifice?*" Abraham says, "*God will provide himself a lamb.*" When the altar was ready, the wood was laid, and was about to plunge the knife into Isaac, the angel told Abraham not to harm Isaac. God saw in Abraham's heart that he loved Him (God) more than he loved his son. God provided a ram as a substitute for Isaac; its horns were caught in the thicket and it was therefore offered as the offering, unto the Lord for worship. "*Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh*" which means "*The Lord will see to it*", that is, "*The Lord will provide.*"

Abraham passed the test! Every word that came from his mouth was positive and was a spoken word of truth! Passing the test showed the kind of faith that Abraham had, and what Israel would need. They would need to know that substitution is a part of the atoning sacrifices that God will direct Israel to offer. This further enables the people of Israel to see their very existence even in the desert, as part of God's plan, which they must embrace. They would need to also know that God will always provide!

APPLICATION:

My test may not always be your test, but rest assured, there is a test of our faith and obedience unto God. Our very purpose counts on it to show God and the world that we belong to Him!

⁸ <http://www.earnestlycontending.com/ewministries/jerry/genesis22.html>

⁹ <http://www.earnestlycontending.com/ewministries/jerry/genesis22.html>

¹⁰ <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/Genesis/32.html>

¹¹ <http://www.earnestlycontending.com/ewministries/jerry/genesis22.html>