

CGYG & LIFE Bible Study – Genesis 22-23

Read Genesis 22:1-19

-Why did God command Abraham to sacrifice Isaac? Why might this command have been perplexing? (cf. Gen. 17:19-21; 21:8-12)

- God commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac to test him i.e. to test his faith (v.1)
 - not for God's benefit, but Abraham's, i.e. that his faith might be demonstrated to be genuine (cf. James 1:3, 1 Peter 1:6-7)
 - also to foreshadow Christ (see later)
- provide an example for others to learn from
- might not have made sense since God had promised that His promises to Abraham to bless him & make him a great nation would be fulfilled through Isaac and his descendants; Abraham's offspring would be reckoned through Isaac, and God had therefore told Abraham to go ahead and send Ishmael away (21:8-11)
- also, God would later explicitly forbid human sacrifice (e.g. Deut 18:10), although this may not yet have been revealed to Abraham

-How did Abraham respond to God's command (v.3-10)?

- immediate obedience, without grumbling or questioning – got up early the next morning to make preparations (v.3)
- complete obedience – lots of opportunity to back out (e.g. during the 3-day journey), but continued to the point of tying Isaac up and raising the knife to strike him
 - even told servants to stay behind so they wouldn't try to stop him
- worship (v.5) – was going with Isaac to worship God – demonstrates his heart/attitude was right in this matter (i.e. not going to sacrifice Isaac with a grudging heart)

-Did Abraham really believe that he would return from the mountain with Isaac, as he told his servants (v.5), or was he telling them a 'little white lie'? (cf. Hebrews 11:17-19)

- Yes, because he reasoned that God could raise Isaac from the dead (Heb 11:19); thus, offered Isaac by faith
- alternatively, may have thought that God would provide a substitute (v.8)
- either way, trusted that God would somehow still fulfill His promise that his offspring would be reckoned through Isaac

-What does Abraham's example teach us about faith? (cf. James 2:21-24)

- faith without works is dead/useless
- true faith is not mere intellectual assent, but shows itself in works of obedience
 - i.e. you don't truly believe unless it affects how you live
- Abraham's belief demonstrated to be genuine ('justified') by his obedience

-What is the significance of the mountain on which Abraham offered Isaac (v.2,14)? (cf. 2 Chronicles 3:1)

- the 'mountain of the Lord' – Mount Moriah is where the Temple would later be built by Solomon
- also the vicinity where Jesus Christ would later be crucified → "on the mountain of the LORD it will be provided"
 - "the LORD will provide" = 'Jehovah Jireh' (or the LORD will see to it)

-In what ways does this account in Genesis 22:1-19 point forward to Jesus Christ?

- Mount Moriah's significance as area where Jesus would be crucified → "on the mountain of the LORD it will be provided"
- Isaac as a type of Jesus Christ
 - "your son, your only son, whom you love" (v.2) cf. Matthew 3:17 – reminiscent of Jesus as God's Son, whom He loves
 - also John 3:16 – Jesus as God's 'one and only Son'
 - Isaac made to carry the wood on which he was to be sacrificed; reminiscent of Jesus being made to carry His own cross
 - Isaac a willing sacrifice – like Jesus Christ (John 10:18)
 - Isaac likely an adolescent or young man by this point; could likely easily have escaped Abraham (>100 years old!) if wanted to
 - 21:34 & 22:1 suggests passage of long time since his birth
 - had to be strong enough to carry enough wood to offer up a burnt offering
 - thus, almost certainly allowed himself to be bound and laid on the altar as a sacrifice
 - 'God Himself will provide the lamb' (v.8), or 'God will provide for Himself a lamb' → brings to mind God's provision of the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (i.e. Jesus Christ) (e.g. John 1:29)
 - God provides a substitute sacrifice (i.e. the ram) to stand in Isaac's place → points to substitutionary atonement of Christ
 - what God would not allow Abraham to do (i.e. sacrifice his son), God Himself did on our behalf, in providing His own Son to be our sacrifice
 - God's reiteration of the promise that through Abraham's offspring all nations would be blessed – most appropriate place to reiterate it

-What was the result of Abraham's obedience? (you might also consider Hebrews 6:13-17; 11:19; John 8:56)

- received Isaac 'back from the death' (Heb 11:19) → a glimpse of the resurrection
- received God's blessing and tremendous affirmation of God's promises to him (Heb 6:13-17); God swore by Himself that He would bless Abraham
 - reiteration of promise of numerous descendants and that through his offspring all nations would be blessed, but also new promise that his offspring would possess the gates of their enemies
- Abraham 'saw the day of Christ' (John 8:56) – saw a glimpse of the glory of Jesus Christ's work of atonement (see also John 11:40)

-What can we learn from Abraham's example about facing trials? (you might also consider James 1:2-4,12; 1 Peter 1:3-7)

- obedience on the face of trials – necessary to bear the fruit and to see God's glory in it
 - Abraham might have missed the glimpse of the glory of God's salvation in Christ that he saw, had he failed to obey
- the testing of our faith builds perseverance and maturity (James 1);
 - refines our faith and brings glory to God when our faith proven genuine (1 Peter 1)
- perseverance in faith in the face of trials requires trust in the promises of God (in this case, that God would provide offspring through Isaac)
 - requires us to know what God's promises are in the first place; thus, need to know Scripture
- perseverance in faith in the face of trials results in greater assurance in the promises of God

Read Genesis 22:20 to 23:20

-Why might those living in the land have considered Abraham a 'mighty prince'?

- God's working in his life was clear for others to see (e.g. with Abimelech in Genesis 21:22ff)
- was a very wealthy man
- was powerful; had 100s of men in his household; had previously defeated an alliance of 4 kings in Genesis 14

-Despite any respect the Hittites may have had for Abraham, was Ephron's offer to 'give' the land to Abraham genuine?

- most likely not; price of 400 shekels likely highly inflated to take advantage of Abraham's need for a burial site
 - cf. Jeremiah 32:9 – price of field was 17 shekels; hard to compare for sure, since don't know sizes, etc.

-What is the significance of Abraham's decision to bury Sarah in the land of Canaan, instead of sending her back to their native land to be buried with their family? (cf. Genesis 49:29-32)?

- shows he was there to stay; no turning back, but was committed to taking hold of God's promise that this would be his land and the land of his offspring

-How does the Bible evaluate Sarah's life? (you might also consider 1 Peter 3:1-6; Hebrews 11:11 in ESV/NASB, or NIV footnote)

- she is the only woman in the Bible whose age at death is recorded; a special honor?
- she is considered a woman of faith and is included in the 'hall of faith' – Heb 11:11
- a holy woman, who put her hope in God (1 Peter 3); 'mother' of those who do right and do not give way to fear
- she is said to have had a submissive spirit and the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, of great worth in God's sight
 - referred to Abraham as her 'master' in an unguarded moment when she thought no one was listening (Gen. 18:12) → shows genuineness of heart

Aliens and strangers in the world

When God tested his faith, by faith Abraham offered his son Isaac as a sacrifice, even though God had said to him that it was through Isaac that his offspring would be reckoned. He believed God's promises and trusted that God would fulfill every single one, even if it meant having to raise Isaac from the dead (Hebrews 11:17-19), and so he obeyed God's command immediately and completely, and he continued on in an attitude of worship. As a result, he was blessed even more by God and received greater assurance of the certainty of God's promises. More than that, he caught, in God's provision of a substitute for Isaac, a glimpse of the glory of Jesus Christ. What God prevented Abraham from doing in sacrificing his son Isaac, God Himself would do, by providing His One and Only Son as the Lamb who would be sacrificed for the sins of the world.

When God brings trials into our lives for the testing of our faith, we ought to respond with the same faith and trust as Abraham did. If we respond in faith and obedience, such testing will refine our faith, producing perseverance and maturity that will bear fruit for the glory of Jesus Christ (James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 1:3-7). Not only that, but we will receive the crown of life that God has promised to all who love him (James 1:12). Spend some time reflecting this weekend on times in your life when God has used trials to test your faith. How did you respond? Resolve to respond in obedience and worship when next your faith is tested.