

A Willing Sacrifice

Palm Sunday, April 9, 2017

Today, we're going to look at, what I consider to be one of the most mind boggling events in the Old Testament, Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son as an offering to God! What a seemingly outrageous and unthinkable command from God to Abraham, based on what we know of our God. Although for Abraham, human sacrifices were not something unfamiliar to him, because many religions of his day practiced it. And yet, God, up until this point in their relationship had never asked for him to do that.

So, even though it was not something unheard of in Abraham's day and even though it did not make logical sense to Abraham, he still trusted in Yahweh, God Almighty. To get a better understand how Abraham could trust God in this situation let's read about Isaac's birth in **(Genesis 21:1 – 6):**

1 And the Lord visited Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as He had spoken. **2** For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. **3** And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him—whom Sarah bore to him—Isaac. **4** Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. **5** Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. **6** And Sarah said, "God has made me laugh, and all who hear will laugh with me."

Abraham could trust God, because God kept his promise of giving Abraham a son and because of Isaac's miraculous birth.

Now remember, Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90 when Isaac was born. That's a true miracle. There is another miraculous birth, I am sure you can recall...Mary, a virgin, gave birth to Jesus without being with a man. Both of these events, resulted from the work of the Holy Spirit. The birth of Isaac was a foreshadowing or foretelling of the birth of Jesus!

Now that we could see how Abraham might trust God and obey this mind boggling command of God, let's turn to one of the most well-known and famous passages in the Bible in **(Genesis 22: 1 – 14)**.

1 Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

2 Then He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

3 So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

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

5 And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you."

6 So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together.

7 But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son."

Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"

8 And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." So the two of them went together.

9 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.

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

11 But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am."

12 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."

13 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.

14 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."

Biblical scholars will say that Isaac is anywhere from age 12 to 30 at this time in his life. He carried the wood, was willingly bound and laid on the altar to be sacrificed.

This Biblical account, like the other of his birth, is another foreshadowing or foretelling of a future event to come, Jesus' willingness to be sacrificed by His Father, God.

And just as mind boggling as it was for us to understand how Abraham obeyed God and could offer up his only son that he had been promised to be his heir, it can be equally mind boggling for us to understand how God could offer up His only begotten Son to be a sacrifice for us! Look back at **(Genesis 22: 12 – 14)** one more time:

12 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."

13 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.

14 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."

In verse 13, God kept His promise to Abraham about his heir Isaac, by stopping the sacrifice and providing a ram to take Isaac's place on the altar. This is another foreshadowing or foretelling.

God would provide Jesus, as the sacrificial lamb, to bear the sin of mankind.

God provided the best and only solution to fulfill the law and forgive us of our sin in Jesus death on the cross. We read that it was prescribed as the cure for our sin long before creation itself in **(I Peter 1: 18 – 20)**:

18 knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, **19** but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. **20** He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you

As the ram was provided to take Isaac's place and allow him to live, so Jesus, the lamb, was provided to take our place and allow us to live!

When we think of Isaac's experience with his father on the way to Mount Moriah, we see the gospel story foretold. They travelled three days to Mount Moriah and it took three days from Jesus arrest to Calvary. Both Isaac and Jesus were as good as dead to their prospective fathers, because their destiny to die was to be without return on their way to die. Isaac even carried the wood for the offering as Jesus carried the wooden cross. Even though Isaac did not actually die, in God's eyes Isaac died figuratively. Turn to **(Hebrews 11: 17 – 19)**:

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

Did you catch the last part of verse 19?

Isaac was figuratively raised up from the dead, foretelling of the literal event of Jesus being raised from the dead!

Remember the words of Jesus that were recorded in **(Luke 24:7)**:
saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.'

Now that we have seen how the account of Abraham sacrificing his son on Mount Moriah was a foreshadowing or foretelling of the coming death and resurrection of Jesus, there is also an ongoing example of this today that we can see. It is a unique example of the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus that effects every Christian.

Turn to **(Romans 12:1)**:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

Do you think Abraham asked Isaac to be the sacrifice? Do you know God the Father asked Jesus to be the sacrifice for us? And here in Romans Chapter 12 God asks us through the Apostle Paul, to be a “living sacrifice”.

Isaac laid himself down willingly as a sacrifice, so did Jesus.

Are you willing to do the same? _____

We must give all that we are to God to be in His perfect will. (Rom. 12:2)