

Bi121 Old Testament

Lesson Bi151-10 Abraham's Faith Tested (Genesis 22)

Everybody gets excited about a new baby and every baby is special. Ah, but this baby really was special! When Abraham was a hundred years old, his 90-year-old wife Sarah gave birth to a son. They called him Isaac, which means ‘laughter,’ because Sarah said; “God has put laughter in my heart. And all who hear about my giving birth to a child will laugh with me. Who would have thought that I would have this blessing?”

When Isaac was a young man, God came to Abraham, perhaps in a dream, and said, “Abraham.”

“Here I am,” he replied.

“Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love so much, and go to Moriah on a mountain I will show you. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering.” This region of Moriah is now the temple mount in Jerusalem (2Chron 3:1), where the Dome of the Rock, a Muslim structure stands. This type of sacrifice is described later in the Bible. It involved killing a lamb, and then burning the dead animal. It was a sign of complete surrender to God by the one who made the sacrifice.

So Abraham obeyed promptly and without question. Early the next morning, he got up and cut wood for the sacrifice. He loaded his donkey, and taking his son and two servants, started on the journey from Beersheba to Moriah. It took three days for them to reach the mountain. Abraham said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey. Isaac and I will go and worship the Lord. We will come back after the sacrifice.” This was a real statement of faith as it was Isaac who was to be the sacrifice. Placing the wood for the fire upon Isaac's shoulder Abraham carried the hot coals and the knife.

As they trudged up the slope of the mountain Isaac looked around and asked: “Father, we have the wood and the fire, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

Abraham looks at his son and said, “God himself will provide the lamb for the sacrifice, my son.”

Finally they reached the place where God had commanded him to make the sacrifice. Abraham and Isaac found large stones to from the base of the altar. He then carefully arranged the wood so that the coals would cause them to catch fire rapidly and burn completely. Abraham then reached out and took his young son into his arms and carefully tied him up. One can only imagine what thoughts and fears ran through the lad's mind as Abraham lowered him onto the altar. Now sacrifices were not burned alive, but the animals throat would be slashed and its blood poured out before the fire was set. Abraham lifted his knife as he prepared to deliver the blow. Abraham knew that all of his descendants were promised by God to come through Isaac. The mere fact that he at a 100 and his wife at 90 had born the child was a miracle. How God would

fulfill his promise after the boy was dead and burnt upon the altar was not Abraham's problem. It was his responsibility to obey God. Suddenly, with the blade raised and ready to fall, the angel of the Lord urgently called to him from heaven. "Abraham, Abraham!"

"Here I am," Abraham cried hoping against hope.

"Do not lay a hand on the boy. Do not do anything to him. For now I know you fear God, since you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

A great sigh escaped from Abraham as he looked down at his precious son. Then, as Abraham looked up, a movement in the brush caught his attention. Standing to his feet he walked towards the bushes and discovered a ram with his horns caught in a bush. He quickly cut the bonds from his son and together they sacrificed the ram upon the altar they had prepared. "Isaac, my son. Remember this place. We will call it, 'The Lord Will Provide.'" Abraham said to Isaac as they completed their worship and prepared to return to their home.

The Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time. "Because you have obeyed me, I will bless you and your descendants. I will make your family members as numerous as the stars in the sky or as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies. And all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me" (Gen. 22:18). Then Abraham and his son and servants went home.

This mountain became known as the mountain of the Lord. The writer to the Hebrews, in the New Testament, gives us additional understanding about this event. This was God testing Abraham. In the test he trusted that God would provide a way of escape, for Isaac was the promised son. Abraham believed even if God had to raise Isaac from the dead to fulfill His promise, He could do it. In a way it could be said that Abraham did receive Isaac back from death when the ram was killed in his place (Heb 11:17-19).

James, the brother of Jesus, later used the story of Abraham to teach about faith and deeds. He explained that Abraham's faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. "And the scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,' and he was called God's friend. You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone" (James 2:21-24).

This story is important because it demonstrates how much the faith of Abraham had grown. God had asked many things of Abraham, to leave his land and to trust him for a son through Sarah, but to offer his son as a burnt offering was the greatest test of all. Through this test concerning Isaac, Abraham demonstrated that he loved and trusted God above everything else. God did not desire Isaac's death, but rather Abraham's total commitment. Just as God provided the ram to die in Isaac's place, so also Jesus, the Lamb of God, was given as a ransom for us.

The main truth of this story is that Abraham was willing to believe God's word, even when he did not understand God's plan. As Abraham acted in faith, so God renewed the covenant of blessing with him. This is one of the most important stories of Genesis, for it shows the obedience of faith and foreshadows God giving His own Son Jesus as a sacrifice for the sins

of all people. “God so loved the world that He gave His only son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

To review this lesson, answer these questions.

1. What was the command that God gave to Abraham concerning Isaac?
 - A. [Pause for 6 seconds.] If you said, “to sacrifice him as a burnt offering,” you are correct.
2. Isaac asked about the lamb for the sacrifice. How did Abraham’s answer demonstrate his faith in God?
 - A. [Pause for 6 seconds.] If you said, “Abraham said, ‘God himself will provide a lamb for the sacrifice’,” you are correct.
3. What is the importance of the ram provided by God as a substitute for Isaac?
 - A. [Pause for 6 seconds.] If you said, “It is a picture of God giving His Son to die as a substitute for us.”

Your assignment for this lesson is to listen to the story at least three times. As you hear the story each time, imagine how it happened; see the events in your mind. Then tell the story in your own words as you remember it. Then listen to the story again and retell it until you feel sure you are repeating the circumstances and actions correctly. You may need to have someone check that you are telling the story correctly.

After you tell this story about Abraham to your friend, ask him, “What in this story should be a word of encouragement for people today?” Answer: God is looking for people who will obey Him because of their faith so that He can bless their lives and the lives of their children.