

Genesis 22: 1 -- 13 Gonerby and Barrowby February 2011

Introduction

(e100 challenge -- block 2 -- Abraham Isaac and Jacob)

The birth of a Abraham's son Isaac (chapter 21) was a story so odd it would make headlines in the Daily Mail. -- 90 year old woman pregnant by hundred year old man.

But God had promised Abraham a son -- though Abraham had had to wait many years for the promised to be fulfilled.
Quite a test of his faith as he got older and older.

But now the story gets odder still, and Abraham's faith is tested even more -- to the extreme -- when God instructs him to sacrifice Isaac.
Anyone, especially any parent will feel the horror of such an instruction -- even though child sacrifice was practised in Canaan -- part of the reason why God told the Israelites to wipe out the Canaanites (but that's later).

And apart from the personal tragedy -- what about this great nation which God has promised will descend from Abraham -- if the only descendant is killed.

God had even changed Abram's name to Abraham -- from "exalted father" to "father of many".

How will this come about if Isaac dies.?

We, the readers of the story are told right at the beginning that this was a test -- and that God will not allow Abraham to actually sacrifice Isaac.
But Abraham didn't know that - and this was the greatest test of all.
But God had already developed Abraham's faith to an amazing extent.
Abraham had faith that God would provide a way out -- that he would fulfil his promises and make a great nation from his descendants, -- and therefore that God would provide the sacrifice. (v 8)

Of course, What Abraham couldn't see was that God was using what seemed like a cruel test to make a profound statement.
Abraham unwittingly prophesies God's plan of salvation when he says "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering"

Types

There is a division of theology which we call "typology" -- the study of types. The type is some sort of event or person in the Old Testament which foreshadows or is a counterpart of an event in the New Testament.

So, the Noah's Ark -- the church is the Ark of salvation.

The manna in the desert exp -- bread provided by God to give life to Is seen as a type for..... Jesus saying this bread is my body given for you.

Parallels

Isaac carrying the wood for his own sacrifice, is seen a type of Jesus carrying his cross.

The sacrifice of a lamb in old Testament times and John the Baptist's statement "behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world" The whole idea of Old Testament sacrifice points towards the one sacrifice of Jesus.

So can you see the typology in this story?

Abraham told Isaac that God would provide the lamb --

Indeed, God did provide the lamb-- not just in this story but 1900 years later -- His, God's only Son -- Jesus -- who died on the cross as the once and for all sacrifice for our sins.

And unlike for Isaac, there was no alternative way out available for Jesus. Gethsemane -- Matthew 26:39 ""My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." exp.

Application

Returning to Abraham

Expect tests from God (Gen. 22:1-2)

It's been said that all C's should expect tests from God.

In the "School of Faith" we must have occasional tests, or we will never know where we are spiritually.

Abraham had his share of tests right from the beginning.

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).

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).

He also passed the "fortune test" when he said no to Sodom's wealth (vv. 17-24).

But he failed the "fatherhood test" when Sarah got impatient with God and suggested that Abraham have a child by Hagar (Gen. 16).

Not every difficult experience in life is necessarily a personal test from God. (Of course, any experience could become a test or a temptation, depending on how we deal with it. See James 1:12-16.) Sometimes our own disobedience causes the pain or disappointment, as when Abraham went to Egypt (Gen. 12:10ff)

Sometimes our hurts are simply a part of normal human life: As we grow older, friends and loved ones relocate or even die, life changes around us, and we must make painful adjustments.

We need to Learn to distinguish between trials and temptations.

Temptations come from our desires within us (James 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 (vv. 1-6).

Temptations seem logical while trials seem very unreasonable.

Why would God give Abraham a son and then ask Abraham to kill him?

All believers face similar temptations to sin (1 Cor. 10:13), but not all believers experience the same trials of faith.

God's testings are tailor-made for each child of God, and each experience is unique.

God never asked Lot to face the tests that Abraham faced. Why? Because Lot was being tempted by the world and the flesh and never grew to the place of maturity that Abraham reached.

In one sense, it is a compliment when God sends us a test; it shows God wants to "promote us" in the "School of Faith." God never sends a test until He knows you are ready for it.