

Sunday October 20th sermon: "God Has Provided Himself a Lamb for Our Sacrifice"

Preached at the Lord's Table at Grace Bible Church in Greenwood, MS,
by John Pittman Hey

Genesis 22:1-14; John 1:19-36

Even though I have preached on Genesis 22 many times, it seems impossible to exhaust its insights and blessings!

God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his own most beloved son Isaac.

It took Abraham three days to travel to the mountain where God had commanded the sacrifice be made.

Abraham had trusted in God's promises, and God counted it for righteousness. Abraham would not disobey God's command, even though it seemed that the killing of Isaac would overturn the covenant God had made with Abraham, because according to the Lord, all the promised blessings were to be in and through Isaac his son.

As Abraham travelled with his son and two servants, he must have thought that God would somehow withdraw His command to kill little Isaac. But after three days, the mountain finally came into view.

Abraham told the young men to stay with the donkey, while he and Isaac went alone to worship the Lord. He wanted to keep this humiliation a private matter. Perhaps Abraham feared that the young men, who had grown up with Isaac, might try to stop Abraham from sacrificing him. Surely it would be a great shame to Abraham to have these two servants watch as Abraham slaughtered Isaac, upon whom the whole family's hopes and future depended.

Along the way, Isaac asked his father the most important question: where is the lamb for the sacrifice? Isaac was old enough to understand

that God required an animal to offer up, whose blood was shed to satisfy God's demands upon His people.

How could God be satisfied without a lamb to sacrifice?

Abraham's response to Isaac was profound, even though he failed to grasp its full import: God will provide Himself a lamb for a sacrifice!

Abraham hoped this answer might satisfy and comfort Isaac, and put off Isaac's discovery that he was the lamb God required to be slain.

But what Abraham articulated had been revealed to him by the Holy Ghost, and he spoke prophetically. His statement had an immediate fulfillment, and an eternal one.

Just a few hours later, God did indeed provide a lamb to take Isaac's place, and to rescue Isaac from being slain by Abraham.

But in the future, God would provide Himself as THE Lamb of sacrifice, His Own dear only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus, to take the place of His loved ones as our sin offering, to take away our sins completely.

We know that Abraham did not grasp the immediate promise God had made to him, to spare Isaac with a substitute lamb, because the writer of Hebrews makes that clear: Abraham thought that God would have to raise Isaac from the dead, in order to fulfill His promises to Abraham through the promised child, now slain before his time.

Think of it: The Holy Ghost had revealed to Abraham God's salvation for little Isaac, but Abraham didn't grasp it! Abraham thought of another way that God could keep His covenant through Isaac and his offspring.

This is our sad mistake over and over again: we endlessly speculate how God can rescue us from this or that trouble, only to be surprised when God does so some other way!

Isaac was the promised seed through whom the covenant of God would be brought to pass, yet God commanded Abraham to kill Isaac!

Abraham did receive Isaac back "as from the dead," but it was by substitution provided by God, and not through the resurrection of Isaac!

God's solution was simpler, yet more profound than Abraham's idea. God's solution conveyed the substance of His method of saving ALL his loved ones, by substitution of His Lamb the Lord Jesus in our place!

Thus, Isaac is the archetype of all of the saints: he had portrayed in His body and life the likeness of all of Abraham's children by faith. God blesses us all through the promised seed, even as He blessed the direct seed Isaac, by a substitutionary sacrifice with a Lamb provided by God for us.

So Abraham and Isaac played out the story until almost the end, when the Lord stopped Abraham, and revealed the ram caught in the thicket as the substitute God had promised, but Abraham had not understood.

No doubt Isaac, being a young man, thought he finally understand what Abraham his father had revealed, that God would provide a substitute lamb to save his life. It was probably a shock to him, how God had told what He would do, and then did it! All through Isaac's life, his rescue by God's provided substitute must have increased his faith in God's promises mightily!

But Abraham understood far more: that God would provide Himself the promised Messiah, of the seed of Abraham, to die one day in the place of all His people to save us. The incident taught Abraham far more than the obvious present lesson.

This can be seen in Abraham's naming of the mountain, "the Lord will Provide." It is the same word that Abraham had unknowingly used to explain what would happen to Isaac.

But now Abraham prophetically looked forward into the future to the full meaning of what the Holy Ghost had revealed to him. "In the mountain of the Lord He will provide."

Even the people after Abraham's day, until the time of Moses at least, understood that name to be a prophecy of what God would provide, as He had already provided to rescue Isaac.

No doubt, what Abraham had told Isaac was meant to be a comfort to him, and ultimately to us all: God will provide Himself a lamb for our sacrifice!

Jesus referred to this, Abraham's enlightened understanding, when He told those wicked religious leaders of His day, "Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it, and was glad!"

But most of the Lord's people could only dimly understand, even when the prophets foretold the sufferings and death of Christ for our sins.

When Jesus finally came to John the Baptist, it was John who proclaimed the person of Whom Abraham had spoken all those years before: "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!"

What Abraham had foretold by the Holy Ghost, John now announces, "Here is God's promised Lamb!"

But now, Christ has actually carried out that purpose for which Abraham had delineated His coming: He has offered Himself as the one sacrifice for sins forever, and by His offering, He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified!

Before Christ went to the cross, all men could say in hope and trust was that somehow, someday, "God would provide Himself a lamb for our sacrifice."

But now we can proclaim, no, God HAS PROVIDED Himself our Lamb of sacrifice!

The promise foretold to Abraham by the Holy Ghost has finally, after all these centuries, been completely fulfilled for us!

This completed sacrifice must be our answer to every question, every doubt, every fear, every worry: God HAS provided Himself our Lamb of sacrifice!

We must cherish that promise, announced ignorantly by Abraham, but now fulfilled by Christ for us, as our great comfort and strength: God HAS provided Himself our Lamb of sacrifice!

It answers to everything! It trumps everything! It is our mainstay through all things! God HAS provided Himself our Lamb of sacrifice!

It must be on our lips in praise and thanksgiving morning noon and night. When we awake from sleep, it ought to be the first thing on our minds: God HAS provided Himself a Lamb for our sacrifice!

What could never be said before Christ went to the cross to die for us, now must be proclaimed in all places and times and circumstances!

What God promised to Abraham, God has now finished – He HAS Provided our Lamb!

We love those precious words of the hymn:

I trust the Ever-living One,
His wounds for me shall plead.

Enough for me that Jesus saves,
This ends my fear and doubt;

A sinful soul I come to Him,
He'll never cast me out.

Salvation by my Savior's name,
Salvation through His blood.

For me His precious blood He shed,
For me His life He gave.

I need no other argument,
I need no other plea;
It is enough that Jesus died,
And that He died for me.