

Subject: Abraham's Preview of Calvary

Scripture: Genesis 22:1-14

God told Abraham to go to Mount Moriah and offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. Mt. Moriah was the same location where the temple was later built in Jerusalem (2 Chr. 3:1). Little did Abraham realize that God would use this experience in his life to portray the greatest event of all time, the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. This whole event was a picture of Calvary.

This was a place of testing, a place of trusting, and a place of obedience. Let's dig into this story by asking three important questions:

1. When did God test Abraham?

We need to understand the word "tempt" actually means "test" or put through a trial.

James 1:13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.

Satan tempts us to sin and bring out the worst in us. He wants to destroy us.

God tests us to bring out the best in us. He wants to develop us.

God tested him all of his life. This test came when he was over 100 years old. We will be tested as long as we are in this world. God had tested Abraham many times before this.

- The test to leave his homeland and his family (*Gen. 12:1*)
- The test to trust God for safety in Egypt (*12:10-20*)
- The test to settle a land dispute with Lot (*13:5-9*)
- The test to rescue Lot and his family (*14:12-16*)
- The test to honor God with his possessions (*14:18-24*)
- The test to obey God in the matter of circumcision (*17:23-27*)
- The test to trust God for safety with Abimelech (*20:11-13*)
- The test to give up Ishmael (*21:9-14*)
- The test to sacrifice Isaac (*22:1-2*)

Abraham was just like us. Sometimes he passed the test and other times he failed. But all of his tests were part of God's process in developing Abraham into a godly man.

God had tested Abraham many times before, but this was the supreme test of his life. Character is both developed and revealed by tests. God tells us to expect and appreciate the tests of life. *James 1:2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations (various trials); Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

2. How did God test Abraham?

God tested his love. Did he love his son more than God?

God tested his faith. Would he trust God even if he didn't understand?

God tested his obedience. Would he do what God told him to do?

Abraham passed all three tests. He passed the test of love. He proved that he loved God more than anyone or anything else. Genesis 22:2 is the first time "love" is found in the Bible. Abraham had a special love for his son Isaac, but He loved God even more than his son.

Abraham passed the test of faith. He trusted God even though he did not understand. He trusted God's promise of many descendants through his son Isaac. Abraham knew that God would not lie, so he believed God's word to him. "Never doubt in the dark what God has told you in the light."

Genesis 22:5 *And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.*

Hebrews 11:17-19 *By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.*

Abraham passed the test of obedience. We are saved by grace through faith alone, but real faith is never alone. Real faith in God is proven by obedience to God.

James 2:20-21 *But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?*

Abraham obeyed God promptly and completely.

It has been said that "our faith is not really tested until God asks us to bear what seems unbearable, do what seems unreasonable, and expect what seems impossible."

We may be tested in many ways... by major changes, delayed promises, impossible problems, unanswered prayers, undeserved criticism, and even senseless tragedies, and ultimately all of these will test our love for God, our faith in God, and our obedience to God.

3. Why did God test Abraham?

This test was for God's glory. Everything God does is for His glory. In times of testing it is easy to think about our needs, our burdens, and our pain, but we ought to focus on how we can glorify God in this trial.

This test was for Abraham's good and for our good because what took place on Mt. Moriah is recorded for our benefit. In school we learned the lessons and then took the test, but God teaches us as we go through the test. What did God teach Abraham? He taught him to obey and trust Him for the outcome. But even more important, He taught him a lot about the Lord Jesus Christ and God's plan of redemption.

When Abraham took Isaac and went up on Mount Moriah, it was as if he went to Mount Calvary and saw the death of Jesus on the cross. Abraham understood something of the depth of the Father's love for His Son. He understood something of the perfect submission and obedience of the Son in laying down His life as a sacrifice. He understood that God would provide a substitute sacrifice for all men.

John 8:56 *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.*

Abraham saw the costly sacrifice of the Father in offering His Son. He was willing to sacrifice His one and only Son. **John 3:16** *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

Romans 8:32 *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

Abraham saw the willing sacrifice of the Son. Christ was willing to lay down His life in obedience to the Father. **John 10:15** *As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.*

Abraham saw the substitute sacrifice for believers. God provided the perfect substitute for us. *Jehovah-jireh* means “the Lord will provide.” What God required, He also provided (vs. 8). This is the theme of the Old Testament: God will provide Himself a lamb.

Isaiah 53:6 *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

2 Corinthians 5:21 *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

1 Peter 3:18 *For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.*

God tested Abraham and gave us one of the best pictures of Calvary in the Old Testament. This was “the gospel according to Abraham.” This is why Jesus could say of the Old Testament scriptures:

John 5:39 *Search the scripture; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they that testify of me.*

God is still testing people today, and He is testing us in the same ways...

He is testing our love...do we love anyone or anything more than God?

He is testing our faith...do we trust Him even when we don't understand His ways?

He is testing our obedience...do we obey Him even when it costs us dearly?