

December 19, 2021

“The Lord Gives His Promise
Lesson 3 of Unit

Genesis 22:1-14

Intro

Sometimes, maybe a lot of times, things that test us annoy us. We don't want tests—we want to get on with what we're doing! But sometimes tests force us to consider how important the task is, or call us to grow in our faith.

Abraham is known for his faith, yet he had some stumbling blocks along the way. He tried to save his own life by twice passing Sarah off as his sister. He tried to make God's promise of making him a mighty nation come true by fathering a child through Hagar. Did Abraham learn lessons from those situations which he can now apply? Today's passage deals with a test God gives to Abraham that reveals the depth of his faith.

In lessons 1 and 2, which covered events in chapters 12 and 15 of Genesis, we saw God working in and through Abram (“exalted father”). But today in chapter 22, he is referred to as Abraham (“father of a multitude”), God changing his name in chapter 17.

Read Genesis 22:1-14

1. vs. 1: “Some time later God tested Abraham.”

How much time has passed?

Abraham was 100 when Isaac was born

Isaac is now old enough to help his father carry wood

He could be anywhere from 6 to 15 years old

God is testing Abraham

This isn't an evil or a temptation, like when Satan tested Jesus (Matt. 4)

This is like a test a teacher would give, to see what the student can do

2. vs. 2: The test: God tells Abraham to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering

God refers to Isaac as Abraham's “only son”

Isaac is the son of the promise

God said He would make a great nation from Abraham's descendants

How can this be if Isaac, the only son, is to be sacrificed?

Abraham had fathered Ishmael with Hagar

Ishmael is not the son of the promise

He is the Abraham and Sarah's seeking to fulfill God's promise themselves

God is not in favor of child sacrifice (See Deut. 18:9-12)

God is testing Abraham to see if he is willing to follow Him

God will not allow Isaac to be sacrificed

Moriah is a significant place for this event

It is near Jerusalem

It is where Solomon builds the temple, where sacrifices will be made to God

It is very near where Jesus will be sacrificed on the cross

3. vs. 3: Abraham leaves the next morning
He leaves “early”, indicating he gets right to the task
He cuts just enough wood for the sacrifice
This shows he is obeying God completely, trusting Him completely
4. vs. 4: Abraham arrives at the place designated on the third day
It’s about a 50-mile trip for them
Three days is plenty of time for thinking and reflection
Perhaps he thought of ways to avoid this task
Perhaps he thought about turning around and going home
God provided enough time for Abraham to be committed to obeying
Abraham’s actions weren’t impulsive; they were the result of commitment
5. vs. 5: Abraham instructions to the servants
He tells them to stay with the donkeys
This will prevent them from interfering with what he intends to do
He tells them “We will worship and then we will come back to you”
Interestingly, he tells them that both will come back
The Hebrew verbs indicate a strong determination to do something
“We are determined to return”
6. vs. 6: Abraham and Isaac head off together
Isaac carries the wood intended to be used for his own sacrifice
This echoes Jesus carrying His own cross
Abraham carries the fire and the knife
The fire is likely hot coals in a clay pot or jar
The knife would be a special one, used only for sacrificial worship events
7. vs. 7: Isaac asks a tough question
He notes the wood and the fire are present, “but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”
The animal to be sacrificed is usually from one’s own flock, and brought with them
This shows that Abraham hasn’t told Isaac what is going to happen
No doubt Isaac has been doing some thinking, just as Abraham did
8. vs. 8: This verse shows that Abraham has learned from his previous attempts to “help” God
Abraham has seen God’s past provisions for him and his family
He is confident that God will provide in the present
God’s plans don’t depend on human help
Abraham here is waiting (expectantly!) on God to provide
9. vs. 9: This verse shows the ultimate faith in God
Abraham and Isaac reach the place for the sacrifice
Abraham builds the altar and puts the wood on it, and then ties Isaac on top of the wood
Wow!
It doesn’t say it, but it seems like both Abraham and Isaac would be thinking, “OK, God, anytime now....”

Abraham has followed God's instructions exactly

Think about the growth in his faith since ch.12

The speed of his obedience to God's instructions

The attention to the details in God's instructions

God said that Isaac would be his heir

Where is the alternative to sacrificing his son?

10. vs. 10: Since God hasn't provided an alternative, Abraham begins to take the next step

He takes the knife, preparing to sacrifice Isaac.

What were both he and Isaac thinking at this point?

11. vs. 11: God stops Abraham, using an angel to speak to him

The angel calls Abraham's name twice, a mark of the urgency of listening

Heb. 11:17-19 recalls this event, showing Abraham's depth of faith

It says in vs. 19 that Abraham concluded "that God was able to raise him (Isaac) up, even from the dead..."

This verse strongly implies Abraham would have carried out the sacrifice if not stopped

He believed God would raise Isaac from the dead if that was needed

This test was absolutely real; Abraham passed the test by his faith in God's directions

12. vs. 12: The angel tells Abraham two things

What not to do: don't lay a hand on Isaac, don't do anything to him

The reason for the test: to see if Abraham feared God more than he valued his only son

Abraham obviously fears God; he was ready to carry out the sacrifice

This shows a great deal of growth in Abraham's faith over the last 10 chapters

13. vs. 13: God provides the alternative, a ram caught in a thicket nearby

Notice when God **didn't** provide the ram

Not as the journey began

Not along the way of the journey

Not when they got to the foot of the mountain

God provided the ram only **after** Abraham has shown complete willingness to follow God's instructions

Our text has a good application thought about this verse:

"This is an important lesson for Christians. God's provision does not mean His people will never suffer, face tough choices, or stare at dead ends. It means that God will provide when we find ourselves in these kinds of situations. Sometimes he provides a way out and sometimes a way through. But God will provide.

"Abraham did not know when his ram-in-a-thicket would appear, and seldom do we. We must trust God with an Abraham-like faith that our ram will be there at just the right time."

14. vs. 14: Abraham names that place “The Lord Will Provide”

This account is so well known in Moses’ time, a common saying has come from it
“On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.”

That phrase “The Lord Will Provide” comes from a Hebrew phrase

That phrase literally means “The Lord sees”

This is the same wording used in vs. 8 when Abraham answers Isaac’s question
“God himself will provide the Lamb”

This phrase could be rendered to us, “God will see to it” that provision is made

Application: Abraham was a human, just like us. He faced moments of decision; so will we. Ours will just be different in situation, but not different in character. Ours might be about job choices, or time commitments, or relationships. But they are still all about our choice of whether or not to trust God enough to follow his “instructions” to us—his revealed wisdom in the Word of God.”

Those situations can be used by God as a means of testing the depth of our faith, just like it was used in Abraham’s life. How we respond to those situations helps to show the growth of our faith, even if we don’t handle the test perfectly. Abraham didn’t let his mistakes made due to lack of absolute faith in God to consume him and destroy his faith. He continued on the road of faith that he began. That is what we need to do as well. God will mature our faith through multiple acts of increasing faithfulness in our journey of faith.

Prayer: Father God, we desire to be known as people of faith, just as Abraham and many others in Your Word are known. Help us to trust in Your provision in the midst of every test. Forgive us where we fail; continue to test our faith so it may grow in strength, and so we will be continually more useful to Your kingdom. In Jesus’ name, Amen.