

Abraham's Great Test

Genesis 22

Abraham Challenged

Genesis 22:1-10

Abraham's Direction: Genesis 22:1-2

God Called on Abraham

Abraham had already been called to leave his family and homeland. Several years and trials later, the LORD challenged Abraham again, tempting or trying him in order to prove his faith. It was not temptation to sin but testing to produce strength (James 1:13; 2 Peter 1:7). The test was great and the most difficult Abraham would face. As we will see, by faith he successfully passed the test. No matter what occurs in life, we must always live by faith (Hebrews 10:38).

God Commanded Abraham

The LORD directed Abraham to take his son Isaac and offer him up. It was a direct command from God and anything less than obedience would have been unacceptable. The LORD expected Abraham to follow completely. Today, much Christian service is done half-heartedly without consideration of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). The test was difficult because Abraham loved Isaac dearly. He rejoiced when Isaac was born, celebrated when Isaac was weaned and probably praised God as Isaac matured into a young man. Isaac was his only son; Ishmael was gone and would never inherit the blessing promised to Abraham and his family. All of God's promises rested upon Isaac's life and future (Genesis 21:12). To take him and offer him up to the LORD would be extremely difficult.

1. *Abraham's love for God was tested* – he was directed to forsake all and follow the LORD (Matthew 22:37). God wants to be our God; He does not want to share our faith and love with someone or something else (Exodus 20:5, 34:14).
2. *Abraham's obedience was tested* – he was to completely follow the LORD'S direction one step at a time (2 Corinthians 5:7).
3. *Abraham's faith was tested* – he was called to follow without knowledge of the final outcome (Matthew 6:33-34).

Abraham was to go to the land of Moriah and upon arrival he would be directed up a certain mountain. Notice, Abraham did not receive all of the details but was given enough information to follow God's command. The final destination remained unknown, so Abraham had to go by faith. At this point, Abraham could have objected for several reasons.

1. *Personal reasons* – disbelief and doubt.
2. *Practical reasons* – taking the life of one's child is unnatural and the sign of a disturbed mind. What would others think and say.
3. *Precedented reasons* – it was made clear that murder was unacceptable (Genesis 9:5-6). The law, which came later, confirmed this (Leviticus 18:21; Deuteronomy 12:31).

Abraham was given direction from the LORD and it was up to him to respond. It was a difficult order but it came from God. The LORD is perfect and will never lead down a wrong or dangerous path (James 1:13). His word should be trusted and followed completely, no matter what others may say or think (Proverbs 30:5).

Abraham's Decision: Genesis 22:3-10

Abraham Immediately Obeyed

Abraham left early the following morning without delay or hesitation. With delay often comes distraction and temptation. It is always wise to follow the LORD immediately. After preparing the animals and cleaving the wood for the burnt offering, he took two servants and left with Isaac for Moriah. It was a three-day journey; long enough for Abraham to think and even turn back. It is clear Abraham made a conscience decision to follow God.

Together, Abraham and Isaac climbed the mountain. They went alone, with no distractions and no attention. Isaac took the wood upon him for the altar and Abraham carried the fire and knife. The father and his son trudged up the mountain and fellowshipped together. As they conversed, Isaac curiously asked about the lamb for the offering. He knew something was wrong. Abraham provided a faithful and confident answer to his concerned son, God will provide. He looked to the LORD and encouraged Isaac to do likewise (Psalm 123:2). The altar was built, the wood was put in place, and Isaac was bound and laid upon the altar to be offered up.

Abraham Displayed Great Faith

Abraham trusted God completely and proved his love for the LORD by showing he was willing to part with that which he loved. Nothing came between him and the LORD. Abraham displayed his faith and believed God would provide because He promised to bless the world through his son. If Isaac were to die, Abraham believed the LORD would raise him up (Hebrews 11:19). It is worthy to note that Abraham never asked God to spare Isaac, but simply followed God and trusted His direction.

Isaac also made the trip by faith. It is believed Isaac was a young man, perhaps in his early thirties.

1. *The word for 'lad'* – it refers to a young man, anywhere from childhood to young adult.
2. *His strength* – he was strong enough to make the trip and carry the wood for the altar up the mountain.

Isaac willingly obeyed his dad, which says a lot about his character and upbringing (Exodus 20:12). He could have rebelled and even overpowered Abraham but instead displayed great humility and obedience.

Abraham Comforted *Genesis 22:11-24*

God Provided a Substitute: *Genesis 22:11-14*

Abraham Interrupted

The angel of the LORD called unto Abraham as he prepared to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham immediately answered and was directed to refrain from hurting his son. When the knife began to fall, the LORD intervened. Abraham's faith was taken to the limit and his obedience was pleasing to the LORD (Hebrews 11:6). Abraham feared God and placed nothing before Him.

It was only a test. God never intended on Abraham slaying Isaac, but tested Abraham's faith and obedience. God knew Abraham's heart and stopped him once he committed. Abraham passed the test and his faith was evident. The LORD may allow us to be tried but He will also provide a way to escape (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Abraham Blessed

Abraham saw a ram caught in the thicket, grabbed it, and offered it in place of Isaac. The LORD provided an offering; just as Abraham believed he would. Abraham's needs were supplied (Philippians 4:19). But never forget he was in the correct place because of his obedience and faith. Abraham walked with God, lived by faith, and was blessed. Many desire God's blessings but neglect to obey His word and live by faith. To be blessed we must abide with Christ and keep His commandments (John 15:1-4). Isaac was spared and the rejoicing must have been great. Abraham probably grabbed his son and hugged him with all his might. Isaac lived because God intervened and provided a substitute. Today, salvation is possible because God intervened and provided a substitute – His Son Jesus Christ (John 3:16-17). We are sinners doomed to death but God graciously saves those that repent and trust in Jesus Christ (Romans 6:23, 10:9-13).

Abraham named the place Jehovahjireh, meaning God will provide. It is the symbolic name of Mount Moriah and the place where the Temple was later built (2 Chronicles 3:1). Calvary was located nearby on the same ridge. The entire event foreshadowed what was to come. God the Father would lead His Son Jesus Christ up that same ridge to be sacrificed for sin (John 6:38-40). However, God the Father would spare neither Himself nor His Son like He did Abraham and Isaac (Matthew 26:42). There was no other option, Jesus Christ died so sinners could be saved (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 John 3:5).

God Promised a Sure Future: *Genesis 22:15-24*

Abraham Pleased God and Was Blessed

The LORD noticed Abraham's faith and was pleased (Hebrews 11:6). It was faith that directed Abraham to obediently follow the LORD'S direction and offer up Isaac. His faith produced works (James 2:21). Abraham was already righteous and his faithful actions verified it. Isaac was not slain but Abraham was willing to do so if God demanded it. His love for God was greater than anything else in his life (Matthew 10:37). Because of his obedience, Abraham would be blessed.

The LORD confirmed His promise with Abraham. His descendants would be a multitude, like the stars in heaven and the sand upon the seashore. He was willing to give his only son to God, and would be blessed with more than he could imagine.

1. *The stars are innumerable* – the stronger the telescope the more stars we see.
2. *The sand upon the seashore is innumerable* – we cannot even successfully count the sand on one beachfront.

Through his seed, all of the nations of the earth would be blessed. Once again, the promise of the Messiah was given. Jesus Christ blessed the world with His atonement for sin (John 3:16). It is impossible for God to lie and the promise of a Messiah was verified two-fold, with a promise and an oath. Abraham was given assurance. The world and our flesh will tempt us to doubt but let's be assured that God will keep His word. When the LORD was finished, Abraham and Isaac returned to Beersheba. The return trip was probably filled with joy and laughter.

Abraham Received News Concerning His Family

Though he was a great distance from his family, he cared about their welfare. Perhaps he heard the news through a common friend or a traveler. It was probably encouraging to know that all was fine with them. It was also timely, because Isaac remained unmarried. The LORD was aware of the situation and prepared all things ahead of time. God always knows what is occurring and how to bring about His will in each situation. That is why we must trust in Him and live by faith (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Conclusion

The LORD tested Abraham and his faith by asking him to offer up Isaac. Abraham was willing and ready to obey God. He understood God had given Isaac and that He was able to provide for him and his son. Abraham was willing to follow God instead of pleasing himself, in seeking the LORD'S will he was blessed. God often tests the hearts of His children, in order to see if they desire Him or their own will. Your next trial may be a test; will you follow God and His direction or seek your personal desires and wants? *Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. Psalm 119:2*

Point to Ponder

The LORD gave back to Abraham, what he was willing to give up.

Quote

"Strong faith is often exercised with strong trials and tested with hard services." D. L. Moody

Questions

How was Abraham's faith tested?

How was Isaac's faith tested?

How did God provide for Abraham and Isaac?

How was Abraham blessed due to the test of his faith?

What new truth have you learned from this lesson?