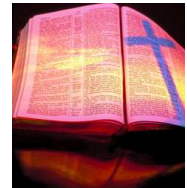


Osaka International Church
Date: July 13th, 2008
Daniel Ellrick
Series: Patriarchs
Title: Isaac
Scripture: Genesis 21-22
Key Verse: Genesis 21:14



I. Introduction

Good morning! Today we are going to look at the story of Abraham and Isaac, a truly remarkable passage of Scripture. If you are hearing it for the first time, this story may seem shocking, but when you come to understand it, it is a very positive and inspiring story. The key to understanding is to let the light of Christ illuminate the story. When the shadow of the cross falls across the page, many difficult passages are seen to be beautiful and inspiring.



Let's take a moment for a little fun. If I said there was a joyful day when, as part of God's redemptive plan, a long-promised child was miraculously born at a special time that God appointed, what day and what child could this be? How many people thought of Jesus and Christmas? Good! That is an excellent answer. And we should think of Christmas and the coming of our Savior year-round, because Jesus is always coming to us in many ways. Merry Christmas! Is a joyful greeting anytime of year.



But there is another child who fits the description, and that is Isaac, the son of Abraham and Sarah. Abraham and Sarah waited for the child God had promised them for many years, long past the age of child-bearing. But finally God restored to them the ability to have children, and at the appointed time, Isaac was born. Let's read Genesis 21:1-6.

Genesis 21:1-6 "[1] Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised. [2] Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. [3] Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him. [4] When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. [5] Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. [6] Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.""

By the miraculous grace of the Lord, as part of God's plan to bring salvation to the world through Abraham's seed, at the very time that God had promised, Isaac was born and everyone rejoiced. The story of Isaac is similar in many ways to the story of Jesus. There is so much resemblance, in fact, that it is clear that the story of Isaac is a prophetic model that God provided in advance to teach us about Jesus. Isaac is a type, or foreshadowing of Jesus. When we understand this, then the story of Isaac becomes beautiful and inspiring.

Now, every section of Scripture is important, but we need to be selective if we want to finish Genesis this year, so I am leaving Genesis 20 and the rest of Genesis 21 for you to read on your own. Let's keep our focus on Isaac and go on to Genesis 22:1-14.

II. Scripture Genesis 22:1-14 (NIV)

[1] Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. [2] Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about." [3] Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. [4] On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. [5] He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to

you." [6] Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, [7] Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" [8] Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together. [9] When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. [10] Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. [11] But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. [12] "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." [13] Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. [14] So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided."

III. Teaching

The first thing we see here is that this is a test. Genesis 22:1a says, **“Some time later God tested Abraham.”** Some older Bible translations may say that God tempted Abraham, but, “tested,” is a better translation. God tests His people to prove their faithfulness. This may not be our favorite teaching, but it is true. These tests of faith and obedience are not for God’s benefit, He already knows our hearts. Instead, tests are for our benefit and for the benefit of others. In the case of Abraham, this severe test of his faith is still benefiting us 4,000 years later, because through it we see Abraham’s faithfulness and God’s prophetic plan.



Genesis 22:2, “Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.” Human sacrifice was common in ancient times. Even in Japan, so-called, “human pillar” sacrifices were used when some bridges and castles were built. But from the whole of Scripture, for example from Deuteronomy 18:10 and Jeremiah 19:5, it is very clear that the God of the Bible never desired human sacrifice. Here in Genesis 22, God commands the sacrifice of Isaac, but only as a test of Abraham’s faith, and to provide a prophetic model to teach us about Jesus and the cross. In the end, the Lord stops Abraham from carrying out the sacrifice.

Notice that the place is to be a mountain in the region of Moriah. Most Bible scholars agree that the Lord led Abraham to the very same Mount Moriah where the city of Jerusalem and the temple were established later, and where Jesus was crucified. Notice also that God says, **“your only son, Isaac.”** We know that Abraham had another son, Ishmael. But in Genesis 22, in verses 2, 12, and 16, three times God calls Isaac Abraham’s, “only son.” This strongly emphasizes that Isaac is the son of promise, and it also strongly reminds us of another father who gave his only son. **John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”** Nothing is said about Abraham’s emotions here, so we are left to fill in the emotions that God the Father has in seeing His Son, Jesus, die on the cross.



Genesis 22:4, “On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance.” From the time that God commanded him to sacrifice Isaac, Abraham probably felt that his son was as good as dead. But now they are approaching their destination and the third day has come. What happens on the third day? Resurrection! The test is not yet over, but the time when Isaac will be given back to Abraham is coming soon. God has said that Abraham’s descendents will come through Isaac, but now God has commanded Isaac to be sacrificed. Abraham must have wondered how God would keep His promise if Isaac was killed. The author of Hebrews gives us insight into Abraham’s thinking. **Hebrews 11:19, “Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.”** Abraham knew that God would keep his promise to provide descendents through Isaac, even if it required a resurrection.

Genesis 22:5, “He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.” Notice Abraham’s confident faith. We will worship. We will come back to you. Abraham’s heart must still have been filled with pain at the awful test. But in faith Abraham tells his servants, that he and Isaac will return.



Genesis 22:6, “Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together,” The wood for the fire is on Isaac’s back, and it reminds us of another only Son who carried the wood to be used in His own death, the cross of Christ.

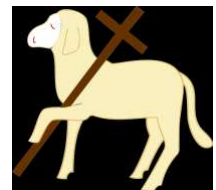
Abraham and Isaac go on alone for the short distance remaining. Gaspard Dughet painted the scene like this in 1660, a painting that captures an intense feeling of loneliness. But Scripture does not tell us much about what thoughts filled their minds or what emotions filled their hearts. It is mostly left to the reader to imagine.



But we do have these words. **Genesis 22:7, “Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"**” Isaac asks a fateful question, one that he has probably been pondering for three days. Genesis 21:34 says a long time passed before this test, so Isaac is a grown man, perhaps even the same age as Jesus was when He went to the cross.

Genesis 22:8, “Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.” Abraham’s answer is prophetic, but it really does not answer Isaac’s question. But still, the two of them go on together, an idea that indicates agreement and common purpose. Two men, father and son, walking toward an appointed place to offer a burnt offering. For some offerings, the meat was eaten, but we know from Leviticus that a burnt offering was not eaten; it was offered whole. But the priest who made the offering was allowed to keep the skin (Leviticus 7:8).

Two thousand years later, John the Baptist echoed Abraham’s answer to Isaac when he pointed at Jesus and said (**John 1:29**), **“Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”** And Jesus would go on to walk the lonely road to the cross. In agreement with His heavenly Father, His life would be poured out as an offering, but His garments would go to those who killed Him.



When they reached the appointed place, Abraham built an altar and bound Isaac. Isaac was a grown man, but he did not resist or attempt to escape. Like Jesus, Isaac willingly submitted to his father’s plan, although it surely must have been with weeping and sorrow. Father and son submit to God in faith, and the final moment comes. **Genesis 22:10-11 “Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.”**

Despite the impossibly high cost, in faith, Abraham obeyed the command of God. Giovanni Battista Tiepolo captures the, crucial moment in this 1729 painting, *“The Sacrifice of Isaac.”* It is a moment of suspense, but there is no need for the test to go further; Abraham’s faith and obedience have been fully demonstrated.



So the angel of the Lord says, in **Genesis 22:12-13, “"Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.”** The sacrifice is completed using a substitute ram providentially provided by God. A ram dies in the place of Isaac. And we remember how Jesus died in our place, as a substitute sacrifice for our sins. As **Romans 5:8**, says, **“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”** Jesus, the Lamb of God, died on the cross for us, as the substitute sacrifice for the sins of the world, for your sins and mine.

Genesis 22:14, “So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said,

"On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided." Notice that Abraham speaks in the future tense, not the past tense. He does not say, "it was provided." He says, "it will be provided." Abraham is not talking about the ram he had just given as an offering. Instead, Abraham is speaking prophetically of the time when God will come in the person of Jesus and give His own life as a substitute sacrifice for the sins of the world. In the NIV translation, the place name is translated, but take a look at the American Standard Version (ASV). **(Genesis 22:14). "And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh. As it is said to this day, In the mount of Jehovah it shall be provided."** This is where we get that wonderful song that says, *"Jehovah-jireh cares for me, His grace is sufficient for me."*

Let's skip forward a bit, **Genesis 22:19, "Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba."** Do you notice anything odd about this verse? Where is Isaac? Surely, Abraham and Isaac returned together, just as Abraham had said to his servants. But Isaac is not mentioned. I think that this silence about Isaac is also part of the prophetic model. Jesus is alive and with us today, but we cannot see Him. In a similar way, Isaac is alive, but hidden in the text, just as Jesus is hidden from our eyes.

When will we see Jesus in visible form? Yes! At the Second Coming, when Jesus comes to claim His bride, which is the church, and take us back to heaven with Him. In Revelation 19:7 and elsewhere, the Bible speaks of the church as the Bride of Christ. A bride that is anxiously awaiting the coming of the bridegroom.



And Isaac does not appear again in the Scripture until his wedding day, when his bride is brought to him. The anticipation of that day begins here in Genesis 22, the rest of the chapter is a genealogy of Abraham's brother, Nahor. Abraham has received joyful news from far away relatives. And in the list of names, in Genesis 22:23, there is a daughter named Rebekah. She is the woman who will be Isaac's bride in Genesis 24, and she is a prophetic model of the church. But we will talk about that later.



IV. Conclusion

What can we learn from the story of Abraham and Isaac? We see once again that God is the loving Author of history and that it is all about Jesus. I only mentioned some of the more obvious things, but it is clear that God arranged the events of today's story and the way in which it was recorded in order to provide a detailed prophetic model of Christ's coming. And, when we read the Scripture through the lens of the cross, even the difficult passages make sense, they come into focus and they inspire us.



Also, we see again that God always keeps His promises. God kept His promises to Abraham, and He kept His promise to send a perfect Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world. Finally, we see that Abraham's faith in God was a radical faith of absolute obedience and of complete trust in God's love. Even during the most difficult test imaginable, Abraham was sustained by His faith. Of course, from the preceding chapters, we know that Abraham did not start out with this kind of faith. Instead, it was grown and cultivated by many long years of walking with God and seeing His love and faithfulness demonstrated again and again. Knowing God's promises and seeing God's loving provision, we are strengthened to walk confidently with Jesus and to have full confidence in God's Word.



V. Let's Pray