

## **Seeing the Lord of the Word in the Word of the Lord**

*Jesus: Our Substitute*

Genesis 22

2007-11-15

### **Introduction**

I had the opportunity to go on a mission trip to Southeast Asia a few years ago. Gina, Keith, Allison, they were all part of that trip. It was a great chance to see a different culture, meet new people, and build relationships that are stronger today than they were then. It was hot, Keith did not shower often..., and I had to sleep next to him! There were struggles on the trip. At the same time, there were so many positives. I vividly remember sitting in a room in a dorm on the coast as we were ministering to college students. Keith and I have stacked our bunk beds on top of one another and were about an inch from the ceiling fan because it was so hot. That night we had the opportunity to share the gospel with 15-20 young men that crammed into our room to hear us talk about Jesus and the gospel.

While on that trip, we also had the chance to do some work at an environmental conservationist park and to work with students from all over the world. We were allowed to feed crocs, give tours, and build things. Some of us guys had an opportunity to speak to one young man from Sri Lanka and talk with him about his faith. He was a Buddhist and believed that he had to work to gain eternal life. If he were not perfect then he would have to go through life again and again until he got it right. His “salvation” was totally dependent upon what he did.

There are so many religions and ideologies around us today that want us to believe that our “salvation” is dependent upon what we do, on how hard we work for it, instead of being based on what God has done for us.

In this passage of Scripture, we see it is always God who will provide!

### **Intro Text: Setting the Stage**

Abraham and Sarah were promised a son through which all the nations would be blessed. God had visited Abraham in chapter 17 and promised the birth of that son. Abraham and Sarah both laugh at the possibility that they could have children in their old age. Abraham was close to a hundred years old and Sarah only about ten years behind. How funny it was for them to think that God would give them in a child in their old age. Again, in chapter 18 the Lord promises to Abraham that his wife shall bear a son to him....Sarah hears this and laughs at the thought.

But God did exactly what He said He would do. He is the God who speaks and brings to pass those things that He promises.

*“The Lord visited Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did to Sarah as he had promised. And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him.” (21:1-2)*

The name of the boy would be Isaac, which means “laughter”, because of Abraham and Sarah’ laughter at the thought of having a child in their old age. Isaac is the son of promise. It is Isaac through which God promises to bless the nations to come.

Abraham did have another son. His other son was the son from Hagar. This son was named Ishmael. But he was not the son of promise. God would indeed bless and protect Ishmael, but would have him sent away at the request of Sarah. When Ishmael is sent away you find Abraham with a lone son, his one and only son. It is this son that God calls Abraham to give up.

### **The Text: Burn the Bridges in Front of You!**

*“After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, ‘Abraham!’ and he said ‘Here I am.’ He said, “take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.” (vs. 1-2)*

Here we jump into a story and immediately we feel the pressure, the tension of the scene. What a thing to ask Abraham to do! To give up the son who he had waited so long for.

Isn’t it this God that has forbidden the sacrifice of humans? It was God who affirmed the value of human life in Genesis 9. In Egypt life was viewed as cheap, not here. But He is calling for that very same thing right now. But it is even more complex than that. It was Isaac that was the son of promise. It was through Isaac the nation of Israel would be blessed. Without Isaac the blessing could not come!

Can you imagine the pain of Abraham? Isaac was where Abraham’s hope rested. It was through this son that God had made him a promise. But just as when God called Abram to leave his home country and burn the bridges in his past, now God has called Abraham to burn the bridges in front of him, to give up his future! And to do it by giving up the “son” that he loves!

The tossing and turning, the questioning, the weeping that Abraham must have done. Can you imagine the God of Creation stepping into history and asking you to sacrifice your best friend, your sister or brother, your mom or your dad? Could we be found faithful in that moment. Even it doesn’t mean putting them on a sacrificial altar.

### **An Implication Not to Be Missed**

This is an implication that we cannot miss. God may call us to give things up for Him. There may be a day when obedience to God means that we have to sacrifice a relationship on the proverbial altar.

I know for me obedience to the commands of God has cost me friends. There are many people whom I grew up with that I no longer have a good relationship with. I don't party with them, or think as they think. I stand for things that they don't understand and our friendships have been affected. But that is nothing compared to what some have to sacrifice to be obedient to God.

The Voice of the Martyrs records this story about a man and what obedience to God cost him!

(INSERT STORY: Read from Magazine)

We must be willing to give up everything to follow the God of Creation. But we do so gladly, because we recognize that following God is more valuable than not.  
(Hidden Treasure/Pearl)

### **The Text: The Journey**

*“So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.” (22:3)*

The journey begins. Abraham wakes up early and begins to get ready for the journey. It must have an agonizing morning for the father. He is packing for the trip, saddling the donkey, making sure they have the supplies they need. Among the supplies is the wood needed for the burnt offering. He had to cut it himself, every swing of the axe bringing another tear.

The journey would last three days for the group. You can imagine them walking together, Abraham making every moment he has with his son count. And then, they arrive at the mountain. They begin to unload the supplies and Abraham tells he two servants to stay put. Only Isaac and his father needed to go any further. He tells them they shall return. Maybe a glimpse of faith that Abraham had in the a God who would provide. Even while they walk, Isaac asks his father where the lamb for the sacrifice is. Abraham replies:

*“God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.”*  
(22:8)

The book of Hebrews tells us that Abraham was confident that even God could raise the dead. It is here that Abraham displays a resurrection faith.

*“By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead...” (Hebrews 11: 17-19)*

### **The Text: Game Time!**

Abraham is determined to go through with this act. They come to the appointed place and they build an altar. Then he takes the wood lays it in place, turns to his son, and binds him.

Now think of this scene. Isaac was young and strong, Abraham old and weak. Isaac was probably quick, Abraham was slow. But even though Isaac more than likely could have escaped he submits to his father. He allows himself to be bound and placed on the sacrificial altar. You have an only son willing laying his life down at the request of his father.

*“Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son.” (vs. 10)*

He was going to do it. Abraham was going to take that knife and plunge it into the chest of his son! But the angel calls out to him and tells him to stop. He had passed the test. This was a demonstration of his faith and trust in the God of Israel. Abraham lifted his eyes and there in the bushes was a ram that was caught! Indeed the Lord had provided in a miraculous way. The ram takes the place of Isaac!

*“And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called the name of that place, “The Lord will provide”, as it is said to this day, On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.” (13b-14)*

In all world that is constantly telling us to rely upon ourselves, that you can count on no one, what God wants you to understand is that you can depend upon Him. We live in a society today that in many ways tells us that to get into heaven when you die there are things you must do. As long as you do the rights things, are a good person then God will let you into heaven. What the Bible teaches us is that there is nothing that we can do to gain entrance into the kingdom of God except trust in the salvation that He has provided for us. God is the one who provides for His people who can't provide for themselves. It is this God who provides for Abraham and Isaac on the mount.

### **Seeing Christ in the Passage**

When we look at this passage where do we see Jesus? I believe there are two places that we see Jesus most vividly.

## 1. Isaac as a type of Christ.

The Bible says that Isaac is laid upon the altar by his father. You have a son who willingly lays his life down at the request of his father. Where else do we see this attitude of submission?

In the life of Jesus Christ we see submission to the will of His Father who is in heaven. It is Jesus who humbles Himself under the mighty hand of God and submits to His sovereign will.

*“Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to accomplish His work.’ (John 4:34)*

*“For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of Him who sent me.” (John 6:38)*

*“Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, ‘Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’ (Hebrews 10:5-7)*

*“I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have the authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.” (John 10:14-18)*

Just as Isaac lays his life down willingly at the request of his father so Jesus lays his life down at the request of His Father who reigns from heaven, and He lays it down out of His love for His bride, His people.

## 2. The Ram as the Substitute.

When we read this story we have to ask who the first-century reader would have identified with. Would they have identified with Abraham or Isaac? No doubt on some level they would have been able to relate with Abraham and having to make tough choices to be obedient to God. But on a deeper level I believe they would have identified with Isaac.

If Isaac died on that altar, there never would have been a people called Israel. He was the son of promise, the offspring of Abraham that God would bless the nations through. As they see Isaac laid on that altar they see their very existence hanging in the balance. The knife goes up and the readers eyes widen. Then the angel speaks. Abraham looks back and sees the ram caught in the bushes. The ram is offered instead of Isaac, the ram instead of Israel. God has provided.

God is teaching His people then and us today that He will provide for us. He does so in the person of Jesus Christ.

*“The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29)*

It is Christ who would come and offer Himself in place of Israel, in place of us. **The ram instead of Isaac, the ram instead of Israel, the Lamb instead of us!**

### **APPLICATION**

There are so many people today who wonder whether or not they can trust God to provide for their salvation. They think they have sinned too much, are past the reach of God. But that is not the case. It is God who has provided for the salvation of His people.

Notice 3 Things:

1. You are unable to earn your salvation. We are all horrible sinners and are equally separated from God because of it.
  - a. Romans 3:23
2. God loves us so much that He has provided His own Son as a sacrificial lamb so that His people around the world might live.
  - a. John 3:16
3. All we must do is surrender our lives in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, and on the basis of our faith in Jesus God welcomes us into His arms.
  - a. Romans 5:1-2

### **Conclusion**

The God of Israel has provided for His people. He has called us to draw near to Him through the blood that was shed on the cross by His Son Jesus. May we surrender all efforts to come to Christ on our own and trust God alone to provide for our salvation.