

KNOWING GOD ... better

The LORD Will Provide

Text: Gen. 22:1-18

INTRODUCTION: When we began this series, I told you that **we can learn about God through**

- **His actions, what He did and does.**
- **His words, what He has spoken.**
- **His names, revealed in both the Old and the New Testament.**

Thus far, we have used the names of God revealed in the Scripture, often tied to particular actions to understand more about who God really is as opposed to what the world often says about Him.

Our text **today** takes a different approach. **We will look primarily at the actions of our God which resulted in a name, a name not originally given to God personally, but to a place.** The text tells a story, and it is one of the most moving stories in all of Scripture.

Would you follow the story carefully as I read it, either to hear it and understand the story itself for the first time, or, if you have read or heard the story a hundred times, to be reminded of its beauty and tremendous significance in our lives today and for eternity. It also reminds us of our greatest reason to be truly thankful, more than for an insurance check, or house progress, or a return to normalcy, a reason that lasts forever. For now, just embrace the story; we'll come back and examine the details.

Genesis 22:1–18 NKJV

1 Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 2 Then He said, "Take now 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."

3 So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. 4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off. 5 And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you."

6 So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid *it* on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. 7 But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering?" 8 And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." So the two of them went together.

9 Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. 10 And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

11 But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am." 12 And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only *son*, from Me."

13 Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind *him* was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said *to* this day, "In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided."

15 Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, 16 and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only *son*—17 blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

My, oh my. What a story. If what happened in the lives of Abraham and Isaac does not cause your heart to stir, you better slip a finger up on your carotid artery and make sure your heart is still beating.

But dear friend, the most moving thing about the story is that it is true – every word of it. This is no Hollywood attempt at sentimentality or an author's attempt at a tear jerking novella. This is a real life episode in the lives of a father and a son, but it is a story that ends with a promise for us all: men, women, teens, boys, and girls.

God sent Abraham and his beloved son Isaac to a mountain in the land of Moriah.

- Isaac had been the miracle baby of Abraham and Sarah's old age.
- The one who would transform their barrenness into a great nation.
- The one through whom all the families of the earth would be blessed.
- It was Isaac through whom God would cause Abraham's name to be made great and his descendants to number as the stars of the sky.
- Isaac was the son who was the fulfillment of all of God's promises and the living testimony of all of God's wondrous power.

But God told Abraham, "Take now 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." Genesis 22:2 NKJV

Imagine the anguish of Abraham as he climbed Moriah's slopes. He had told Isaac that they were going to worship the Lord. They carried the wood for the altar and the fire to light it. But Isaac asked the piercing question, "Where is the lamb for the offering?" With faith stretched to its limits, Abraham responded, "Son, God will provide."

I do not think I can even comprehend how Abraham raised the knife into the air over willing Isaac's trembling chest. As the upward arc of the blade reached its peak, the voice of God stayed the hand of Abraham.

Genesis 22:12 NKJV And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

With sobs of joy, Abraham must have abandoned the knife and embraced his son whose confidence in God had matched his own. Through tear washed eyes he looked beyond the clearing to see a ram caught in the thicket, which together Abraham and Isaac sacrificed as a burnt offering to the Lord.

Now that we understand the story, let's look at some of the details of the text that reveal other helpful information and application to us all.

Genesis 22:1 NKJV Now **it came to pass** after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

It came to pass is a phrase used often in narratives of the Scripture that signals a significant event is about to occur. This tells us that what happened in the lives of Abraham and Isaac was not just important to them and their families. It is important to us.

Genesis 22:1 NKJV Now it came to pass after these things that God **tested** Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

Tested is the Hebrew word *nasah*, and it is sometimes translated to prove. This was in fact what God was doing with Abraham. God knows everything, so He knew what Abraham would do, and He knew that Abraham trusted Him fully. So **this was not a test to determine what would happen. It was a way to prove that Abraham's faith was genuine** to Abraham himself, to Isaac, and to a multitude of others.

This is the difference between a test and a temptation.

- **A test is intended to prove someone can pass the test.**
- **A temptation is intended to cause someone to fail.**

God never tempts us.

James 1:13 NKJV Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, **nor does He Himself tempt anyone.**

But God does test us.

God tells us to test ourselves to see if we are really saved.

2 Corinthians 13:5 NKJV Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.

My friend, this morning, each of us should test ourselves. Do our lives prove that we have trusted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior?

- Are we following Jesus?
- Are we obeying Him as our Lord?
- Are we growing in Christ, becoming more and more like Him?

We should test ourselves with the question: How much am I like Jesus?

- Do I love God more than I love the things of the world?
- Do I serve the Lord, sacrificing my time and energy to share in the work of His Kingdom?
- Do I give as Christ gave, or do I give out of the leftovers?

God also warns us that the works of believers will be tested at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:13 NKJV each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and **the fire will test each one's work**, of what sort it is.

It is far better for us to test our own works not only to see if they give proof of our salvation but if they demonstrate a life that invested itself in the things that count for eternity.

Continuing with seeing some of the details of the text about Abraham and Isaac -

Genesis 22:2 NKJV Then He said, "Take now **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."

These words show us the intensity, the difficulty, the seeming impossibility of the test God gives to Abraham, but they show us more than that. To those of us who have the privilege of reading this story after the completion of the New Testament, these words should immediately cause familiar words to leap to our memory.

John 3:16 NKJV For **God so loved** the world **that He gave His only begotten Son**, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

And, did you know, that Gen. 22:2 is the first time the word love is used in the Bible?

Genesis 22:2 NKJV Then He said, "Take now 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."

But there is still more of both interest and importance in verse 2.

Genesis 22:2 NKJV Then He said, "Take now 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."

Moriah was not a single mountain, but a range of mountains. Certain peaks would be named in years to come.

- One was called **the Threshing Floor of Araunah**, and David purchased it as a place to build an altar to worship the Lord.
- Ultimately that same peak was called **the Temple Mount**, because David's Son Solomon built the first temple at that location which David had purchased.
- In fact, the whole of **Jerusalem** was built on some of the mountains of Moriah.
- Together these were called **Mount Zion**.
- Another peak, just outside the walls of Jerusalem, but still a part of the mountain range named Moriah, was a skull shaped hill called **Golgotha** used for execution of criminals. The name of this peak in Latin was **Calvary**.

We find another significant point in verses 5 and 6.

5 And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you."

The Hebrew word for lad here and later in verse 12 means a young man, and it is in fact the same word translated young men in this same verse. So Isaac was not a child as often pictured. He was a young man at the peak of his physical strength, and as such was ultimately a submissive participant, for his father, now well over 100 years old, would have been unable to subdue him.

6 So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together.

Knowing they were headed to the same place our Savior would go, can we help but see a foreshadowing of Jesus carrying His own cross made of wood up Calvary's mountain?

7 But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" 8 And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." So the two of them went together.

We might think from this brief but certainly painful conversation, that Abraham had an idea that God would provide a substitute for his son. We might reason that Abraham did not really think he would have to kill Isaac.

But Paul in the Book of Hebrews tells us differently.

Hebrews 11:17–19 NKJV By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

No, Abraham did not foresee the substitute. He really thought and planned to kill his son Isaac, offering him as a sacrifice to God. But Abraham so fully believed God's promise that Isaac would have many descendants that would turn into a great nation, and that the end result was a

blessing for all the families of the earth, **Abraham thought, "God will raise him from the dead."**

Abraham was wrong, but he was right.

God would provide a substitute for Isaac, so Abraham would not have to slay his son, and God would not need to raise him up. But when the Son of God was laid upon the wood on the top of Moriah, there would be no substitute.

Jesus was the substitute for Isaac, Abraham, and for every one of us! Jesus was the Lamb of God, anointed to be slain for the sin of the world. No one was qualified to take His place. So, after Jesus died, God raised Him up! He came out of the tomb on the third day in a glorified resurrection body to live forevermore as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

And now we read the climax of the story.

9 Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. 10 And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

11 But **the Angel of the LORD** called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am." 12 And He said, "**Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.**"

And the hero of the story is not faith filled Abraham or submissive Isaac, but the Angel of the Lord. He brings the command that stops the hand of Abraham from bringing the knife down into Isaac's chest. And who is the Angel of the Lord?

Sometimes in the Old Testament, the angel of the Lord is one of the holy angels doing the bidding of the Almighty. But this time, the Angel of the Lord is God Himself, probably the Son of God making an appearance before the incarnation. **How can we tell? Because He speaks as God, saying, "You have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."**

13 Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind *him* was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 **And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide;** as it is said to this day, "In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided."

It is from verse 14 that we get the name Jehovah Jireh, our Provider. Using this name for God is not at all inappropriate, for as James tells us,

James 1:17 NKJV Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

But in this case, **Jehovah Jireh was not a name for God, but the name of a place**, one of the peaks of Moriah **where God would provide a substitute to give His life** in the place of the life of a sinner, **first for Isaac, then, centuries later, for each of us.** In fact the name embodies a prophecy: "In the Mount of the Lord, it shall be provided." And so it was when all the sin of the world was placed on God's dear Son, and He became the substitute for each one of us upon the cross.

The conclusion of the story is also highly significant.

15 Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, 16 and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, **because you have done this thing**, and have not withheld your son, your only *son*—17 blessing **I will bless you**, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 **In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.**"

These words prompted James, inspired of the Holy Spirit, to explain the relationship between faith and works.

James 2:20–22 NKJV But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?

Abraham obeyed God when the Lord gave him the most difficult command in all of his life because He truly believed God.

Abraham passed the test as God knew he would, for God knew Abraham believed Him.

Abraham's obedience, his "works" were the end result, the completion, of his faith, which is what the word perfect means in the passage from James, "by works faith was made perfect."

CONCLUSION: There are a multitude of take-a-ways in this passage that reveals so much about the love and character of our God. Chief among them is this:

1. We all need to test ourselves to see if we are indeed in the faith.
2. Many have said, and it is true, **"We do what we believe. Everything else is just talk."**

What we do demonstrates what we really believe. Doing a self-exam of our salvation is not so much asking if I truly trusted Christ way back when. It is asking, "Do I truly trust Christ today?" "Do my actions prove my faith?"

What will our actions this week say about our faith?