

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**
[Adapted from Bethel Bible-
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DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 16

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

Chapter 22-23

INTRODUCTION

We have come to the climatic point of Abraham's faith. Almost a whole chapter is given to describe how God tested his faith. We see Abraham's faith mature to perfection.

Our faith in Christ Jesus needs to be likewise strengthened and perfected. There are times in our lives when we have to make a choice between obeying God and keeping something/someone that we love. There are times when obeying God seems irrational. How do we respond? This study provides some spiritual guidelines for us.

Abraham also demonstrated how we should conduct ourselves during the loss of a loved one. The details provide some valuable and practical insights.

OUTLINE

A. THE TESTING OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH (22:1-19).

1. God called Abraham to sacrifice Isaac (vv.1-2).

2. Abraham responded in obedience (vv.3-10).
 - a. Abraham rose early to travel to Mount Moriah.
 - b. Only Abraham and Isaac went up the mountain.
 - c. Abraham prepared to offer Isaac.
 - d. Abraham answered Isaac that God would provide.
 - e. Abraham bound Isaac and prepared to slay him.
3. The Angel of the Lord stopped Abraham (vv.11-14).
 - a. The Angel of the Lord called Abraham.
 - b. The Angel of the Lord instructed Abraham not to kill his son.
 - c. Abraham saw a ram and offered it as the burnt offering.
 - d. Abraham named the place *Jehovah-jireh*.
4. The Angel of the Lord reaffirmed the Abrahamic covenant (vv.15-18).
 - a. Commending Abraham for his willingness to offer Isaac.
 - b. Reaffirming the covenant blessings.
5. Abraham and his entourage returned to Beersheba (vv.19).

B. ABRAHAM TOLD OF NAHOR'S CHILDREN (22:20-24).

1. Milchah, Nahor's wife, bore him eight children: Huz, Buz, Kemuel, Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel.
2. Bethuel begat Rebekah.
3. Reumah, Nahor's concubine, bore him four children: Tebah, Gaham, Thabash, and Maachah.

C. ABRAHAM MOURNED THE DEATH OF SARAH (23:1-2).

1. Sarah died at the age of 127 in Hebron (v.1).
2. Abraham mourned the death of Sarah, his wife (v.2)

D. ABRAHAM PROCURED A PIECE OF BURIAL GROUND (23:3-16).

1. Abraham sought to buy the cave of Machpelah to bury Sarah (vv.3-9).
2. Abraham bought the piece of land from Ephron (vv.10-16).
3. Abraham buried Sarah in the cave of Machpelah.

The Testing of Our Faith

In the opening verse, God sought to test Abraham's faith. The word "tempt" (KJV) should be understood as testing although it is usually associated with enticing someone to evil or sin. God does not tempt man to sin.¹ God tested Abraham in order to determine the extent of his faith in Him². Of course, Abraham did not know that God intended to test his faith. Otherwise the test would be of no value. The effectiveness of the test had to be both sudden and surprising³.

Abraham had obeyed God in sending Hagar and Ishmael away although it grieved him to do so (21:12) – we may argue that it was because he still had Isaac. But on this occasion, we see the ultimate test. Isaac was the only

child left to Abraham and he loved him dearly. Note how God described Isaac to Abraham: *Take thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest . . . and offer him . . . for a burnt offering . . .* (v. 2). The description is threefold. Each description increases with intensity: first, your son; next, your only son; and then whom you love. Note also that each reference to "son" is preceded by the demonstrative pronoun. This added a degree of solemnity to the divine order.

Surely Abraham never imagined that God would ask him to do such a thing. But the commandment was clear. From the human point of view, God seemed completely inconsistent with His character. This injunction would destroy His plan and purpose.

Abraham understood what God wanted him to do. He did not raise any question or protest. Instead, he *rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering* (v.3). On the third day of his journey, he saw the place where God had commanded him to go. He told the two young assistants to stay with the ass, while he and Isaac proceed to worship on the mount and then return to them (v.5). Abraham referred to Isaac as "the lad" to his servants. Isaac was probably in his teens⁴. This can be surmised from the fact that when Abraham bound his son, he offered no resistance. God may call us to give up a person or a thing. Our

¹ KJV James 1:13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

² Willem A. VanGemeren, Gen. Ed., *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997, 5 vols.) volume 3, p.111, s.v. "nsh," by Terry L. Breninger.

³ Ross, 396.

⁴ Hamilton, vol.2, p. 100. Jewish tradition put Isaac's age at 37. They derived this by subtracting the age when Sarah gave birth to Isaac (90) from the age she died (127). Sarah died suddenly probably from a heart attack when she learned that Abraham offered Isaac as a burnt offering. It is not mentioned that Abraham told Sarah about the offering of Isaac. It would be natural for him to keep the purpose of his trip a secret.

Lord Jesus Christ Himself once declared that if we are not prepared to forsake our family, leave all, and follow Him, we are not worthy to be His disciples⁵. If we want to be a true worshipper and follower of Jesus Christ then we must be willing to sacrifice our treasures just like Abraham. Are we prepared to obey Him in all things? We must demonstrate our trust, faith and obedience in our lives. Let us be living testimonies.

Trusting God to Provide

Abraham gave the wood to Isaac to carry. He carried the fire and took a knife. The conversation between father and son was touching and heartbreaking. Isaac asked the natural question: *My father . . . Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?* (v.7). It must have pained Abraham to answer. He said, *“My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering”* (v.8). Little did Abraham know how true his words were.

Having reached the place, Abraham proceeded to bind Isaac. Isaac did not protest or resist. He trusted his father completely. His submissive obedience to his father's purpose is a faint picture of the perfect obedience of Jesus who humbled himself and took away the sins of the world on the cross. Abraham lifted the knife and as he was about to strike Isaac, the Angel of the LORD stopped him! Although God would not allow Abraham to literally sacrifice the human life of his son upon the altar, both Abraham and Isaac in spirit and

intention went through the sacrifice. Therefore God's call at the last minute and His provision of a ram was, as it were, an illustration of resurrection of Isaac from the dead.

God provided a ram for the burnt offering. Abraham named the place *Jehovah-jireh*⁶ -- today, the name is commonly understood as “The LORD will provide.”

Faith, hope and love are observed but it is Abraham's love for God, which is most prominent.

Being Assured of God's Blessings

After Abraham passed the divine test, the Angel of the Lord called out of heaven and restated the promised blessings (vv.17-18). The LORD swore by His own name His covenant promises to Abraham. This is the first instance where God swore by His name. The purpose is clear: God was laying down the heaviest emphasis on His promised blessings to Abraham. After this, Abraham and all those who were with him returned to Beersheba.

What are the lessons for us? There is the principle of offering and giving to God. All that we have belong to God. What have we given to God in return? Our time? Our service? Our career? Our heart? For where our treasure is, there will be our heart also. God requires the very best from us, even our firstborn⁷. By offering our treasures, we show our love, our faith, and submission to His will. God who sees our heart will provide for all our needs. His dealings

⁵ KJV Luke 14:26 If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. 27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

⁶ VanGemeren, s.v. *rah*, by Jackie A. Naudie (vol.3, p.1009). The passive, to be provided, is expressed by the niph'al. The place of testing was called, “On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.”

⁷ KJV Exodus 22:29 Thou shalt not delay to *offer* the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me.

with Abraham show that if we are willing to offer Him our all, He will not only provide us with the means to do so but He will pour more blessings upon us.

Are we willing to return to Him the things, which He has given to us so liberally? God challenged us through the prophet Malachi, *prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it* (3:10). The question is whether we are willing to offer Him what is dearest to us as an expression of our love and acknowledgement of who He is!

Nahor

Nahor was Abraham's brother (11:26). News came to Abraham that Nahor's wife, Milcah, bore eight sons. The youngest son, Bethuel, had a daughter called Rebekah. Nahor also had a concubine by the name of Reumah, who bore him Tebah, Gaham, Thahash, and Maachah. This section serves to introduce Chapter 24, which features the search for a wife for Isaac from among Abraham's kindred.

Mourning Our Dead

Sarah was called home at the age of 127 years. At her death, Abraham and Isaac were 137 and 37 years old respectively. Abraham mourned and wept for Sarah.

The rest of the chapter reports the arrangements for Sarah's funeral and burial. Abraham negotiated with the Hittites to purchase a piece of land. The Hittites owned the land having migrated and settled there. Abraham was a *stranger and a sojourner*. However, the Hittite was right in saying that Abraham was a *mighty prince*. Abraham had fought victoriously against the five kings

and established his authority over the land. The local chiefs were indebted to him for saving them. Abraham's reputation had spread far and wide, from Dan in the north to Beersheba. Moreover, his wealth, the size of his household and his honesty made him a desirable ally. It was therefore no surprise that the Hittites were more than willing to offer him the best gravesites of his choice.⁸

The gravesite that Abraham wanted was not in the land of the Hittites.⁹ There was a cave in Machpelah in Canaan. It belonged to Ephron. Abraham was prepared to pay the full price for the grave, which was near the city of Hebron. Ephron offered to give it to Abraham for free, but Abraham insisted that on paying for it. Ephron managed to subtly mention that the land was worth *four hundred shekels*. He was not sincere about giving Abraham the land for free. The fact, that he quoted the price of the land and then added that the sum was a small matter, demonstrated hypocrisy and greed. The price for the land was exorbitant by the standards at that time, and Ephron made a great profit. Abraham did not bargain with him. It would not be appropriate on such a solemn occasion. He presented a picture of dignity and respect in his dealings with the Hittites.

Abraham gave Sarah an honoured burial. Although the body is just a

⁸ Ibid., 94

⁹ Paul Wright, ed., *Shepherd's Notes: Genesis*: "The Hittites were a large and influential group in the second millennium B.C. Their homeland was on the Anatolian plateau (modern central Turkey). Ancient records note individual Hittites living various lands along the eastern Mediterranean shoreline. Archaeologists have uncovered evidence of Hittite cultural influence in Canaan. Hebron, an important city in the hill country of southern Canaan, was evidently a Hittite enclave" (p.59).

corpse (as some might call it), it was nevertheless once the body of a loved one. We should therefore give it a proper and fit burial.

Sarah did not see the promise of the covenant fulfilled. She did not see Isaac get married and have children. The theological thrust is that sometimes God's people do not get to see the fulfillment of God's promises. But that does not mean that God has forgotten His promises. He will fulfil them in His time.

The theme of the chapter is the death of one who had been dearly loved. There were recurrences of the words "bury my dead" or "bury thy dead." It was the practice of God's people to bury their dead, instead of cremating them. The funeral and burial, was solemn and dignified.

Death is inevitable. There is no escape from it, except for when Rapture happens. All believers who are still alive will be snatched up to meet the Lord in the air and their bodies will be transformed in the twinkling of an eye. They will not taste death¹⁰. That would be glorious indeed!

¹⁰ KJV 1 Thessalonians 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

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**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS**

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Genesis 22:1-2; James 1:12-16.

TUESDAY: Genesis 22:3-14; Hebrews 11:17-19.

WEDNESDAY: Genesis 22:15-24; Hebrews 6:13-18.

THURSDAY: Genesis 23:1-9; 2 Samuel 12:15-23. Psalm 116:15.

FRIDAY: Genesis 23:10-20; 1 Peter 2:9-16.

Discussion Questions

1. What was God asking Abraham to give up by offering Isaac as a burnt offering?

2. Can you see any similarities between the sacrifices of Isaac and Jesus Christ?

3. What can you infer about Abraham's belief when he told his two servants that he and Isaac would "come again to you," and to his son, "God will provide Himself a lamb"?

4. What did Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac prove?

5. How did God respond to Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac?

6. Chapter 22 verses 20-24 are not directly related to the previous section. Why do you think they were included?

7. How many years had Abraham lived in the land of Canaan? Did he consider himself as an inhabitant of the land?

8. Why didn't Abraham bury Sarah back in Haran, Mesopotamia among his own people?

9. Why do you think Abraham persisted in his desire to pay for the burial plot?

10. What is particularly beautiful and important in each of the following relationships?

a) God to Abraham:

b) Abraham to God:

c) Abraham to Isaac:

d) Isaac to Abraham:

e) How can we apply (a) to (d) to our relationships?

11. Have you faced a situation in which obedience to God required you to give up someone or something you loved? Elaborate.

12. How do Chapters 22 and 23 encourage you when you do not see the fulfilment of some of God's promises?
