

SERMON: THE ISAAC TEST

Genesis 22:1-2

**(1) And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.
(2) And He said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.**

(I will be preaching the entire narrative recorded in Genesis 22:1-19.)

Introduction

There comes a time in life where each of us must undergo a crucial test. Life is full of tests from the womb to the tomb, but one may be the toughest we will ever have to encounter. Such was the case of Abraham in our text. Abraham had many tests, but our text records the most crucial and impactful test. Most of the tests he passed, but there were two that he flunked. Please don't criticize him too much, because we all have made some very bad decisions.

Let me paraphrase some of Spurgeon's classifications of his tests. He had a "family test", when God told him to leave his family and go to a land which God would later show him. He had a "famine test", when he went to Egypt which was virtually famine-proof because they had advanced agricultural techniques, which utilized the flooding of the Nile River to produce two grain harvests each year. He had a "fellowship test", when he allowed Lot to choose the land he preferred, and Abraham took the land that was left. He had a "fight test", when he defeated King Chedorlaomer and his allies and rescued his nephew, Lot. He had a "fortune test", when he paid his tithe to Melchizedek and refused to take anything from the king of Sodom. Unfortunately, he flunked the "foresight test", when he fathered Ishmael, and he flunked the famine test, because he lied and said his wife, Sarah, was his sister.

To his favor, he passed the "final test," which was the most important one. While Spurgeon called it the final test, I like to call it the "Isaac test." We will all have an Isaac test. The Isaac test is a very tough test. I pray that when encountered, we will all pass our Isaac test. It is a test to determine what is most important in our lives, and how we respond has far reaching consequences in the future. Because he passed the Isaac test, Abraham is called the father of the faithful and a friend of God. Many in Scripture are called a child of God, but only Abraham and Moses are called friends of God. Let's unpack this text.

Exposition

1. Abraham's Test.

(Sacrifice Your Long-Waited Son Of Promise On The Altar.)

(A Test Of Priorities And Loyalties.)

(Our Love For All Things Must Subordinate To Our Love Of God.)

(True Faith Will Always Be Tested.)

(Testing Builds Character.)

(Testing Allows Us To Discover Things About Ourselves.)

(The Greater The Calling, The Greater The Testing.)

2. Abraham's Trust.

(Abraham Journeyed Three Days.)

(Abraham Put Feet To His Faith.)

(Abraham Climbed Mount Moriah.)

(Abraham Built An Altar.)

(Abraham Brought Wood And The Knife.)

(Abraham's Trust Trickled Down To Isaac.)

(Isaac Complied.)

(Isaac Was Willing To Become The Sacrificial Victim.)

(Isaac Did Not Resist - He Could Have Easily Run Away.)

(Abraham Was Old – Isaac Was Young.)

3. Abraham's Testimony.

(God Can Instantly Turn Things Around.)

(God Provided A Substitute – A Ram Was In The Bushes.)

(Isaac Returned Home Alive.)

(Faith Will Be Rewarded.)

Closing Thoughts

The story of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, Isaac, has many parallels between the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross of Calvary. Isaac carried the wood; Jesus bore the cross. Jesus was willing to be the sacrificial victim; Isaac was willing to be the sacrificial victim. Isaac ascended to Mount Moriah; Jesus went to Mount Calvary. The journey took three days; Jesus rose on the third day. However, the parallels do not continue. While there was a substitute for Isaac, there was no substitute for Jesus. In fact, as you know, Jesus was our substitute. Each of us should have been nailed to the cross, but Jesus took our places. That's why we praise Him and the celebration of communion is so sacred. Give God Glory! Give God All The Glory!

Related Scriptures

2nd Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8; James 2:21-23.

End Notes

1. As I am sure, you are aware that the Hebrew word the King James Version translates as "tempt" can be better translated for us as "test." Although a test can be a temptation to cheat.
2. This is apparent to most of us. When it was said that Isaac was Abraham's only son, it meant his only son of the covenant birthed by Sarah. Bible readers know Ishmael was born first. This is what scholars call "linguistical omissions." This can really be a problem when you are speaking a foreign language with native speakers or studying a classical language such as Biblical Hebrew or Greek. The Bible is no exception. This is why scholars study the original languages. While I am on the subject, let me give you some familiar English examples of linguistical omission. "He has an attitude." The complete meaning, "He has a bad attitude." "He drinks." The full meaning, "He drinks too much

whisky.” One more example, “There is nothing on TV.” The complete meaning, “There is nothing on TV that I want to watch.” See how a foreigner who is just learning English could get totally confused? Since I am on a roll, I will go even further. French is less prone to omissions than most other languages. This is why the master copies of treaties between nations are written in French.

3. This narrative is the first time the word “worship” is used in the sacred Scripture. (See verse five.) The first use of a word in Scripture is always important to understand the true theological meaning through the original context. Worship in this context implies willing to give up something one considers very valuable. We give our time, our talent, and our treasure when we worship in spirit and in truth. If you or I did not give up something real valuable, it may not be real worship. (I’m just saying.)

4. This Narrative also reveals the importance of hearing the whole counsel of God. If Abraham had only heard the first command of God to sacrifice his son, and not the last command, “Lay not thine hand upon the lad,” the results would have been catastrophic. Our spiritual ears must be tuned to hear God’s voice at all times.

5. The ram was caught in the thicket by its horns. Had the ram been caught by any other part of its body, part of the fleece would have been left on the thorns of the thicket, or the thorns would have made a laceration into its flesh, and the offering would not have been perfect in the sight of our holy God. God’s attention to detail is amazing.

6. God is working when we are not aware of His actions. God was working both sides of Mt. Moriah. When Abraham and Isaac were going up one side of the mountain, God had the ram ascending on the other side of the mountain. God is an awesome God!

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