

Behold Your God, pt.9, 12.4.05

Intro.1. Besides the Cross, No story stirs more emotion about the life of faith than this one. 2. Read Gen.22. 3. I believe this is one if not the greatest story of faith in the Bible...we struggle with it from both an ethical and spiritual standpoint...I think the reason it's so difficult to handle is b/c we don't have Abraham's faith. We look at the story from our faith level and it's beyond our comprehension. The problem is that we can't jump into Abraham's faith level and walk in his spiritual understanding. Abr had great faith which was built upon powerful and unimagineable encounters with God. Consider what's recorded up to this point in his life:

- Gen.12.1 - God speaks to him and tells him to leave his country & promises him great blessings
- 12.7 - God appears to him and gives him a promise;
- 12.17-20 - Witnessed God inflict diseases on Pharoah & his household;
- 13.14 - God speaks to him and makes another promise;
- 15.1 - God appears to Abr in a vision & makes another promise;
- 15.5 - he takes Abr outside and speaks to him
- 15.12 - God speaks to him during his sleep
- 15.17 -18 - God appears to Abr and makes a covenant with him
- 17.1 - God appears to him and gives him the covenant of circumcision and renews his promises to Abr
- 18 - The Lord appears to Abraham & has a meal with him; He reinforces the promise of a son; Abrah then speaks to the Lord and pleads for mercy for Sodom;
- 20 - God speaks to a king Abr feared
- 21 - God fulfills his promise with the birth of Isaac
- 21 - God speaks to him about Hagar & Ishmael

No less than 12xs Abr personally meets God or talks with him. His faith was strong not only b/c God fulfilled his promise with Isaac, but also b/c He conversed with Him so often and did such extraordinary things for him. 4. As you consider the implications of this story don't try to

superimpose your own walk with God. You don't have Abr's level of faith b/c God hasn't revealed himself to you like He did with Abraham. This message isn't about Abr's faith (I could spend several Sundays on that topic), but about how God reveals himself to Abra and how He reveals himself to us through this story.

A. God will test your faith (22.1)

a. Qualifiers:

- i. Sometimes we endure tests/hardships due to our poor decisions, or sinful choices or another's decisions;
- ii. Sometimes Satan is causing the test & God wants you to resist him; (THEN you have Job and no amount of resisting will help)
- iii. sometimes God has provided an answer to the test and you don't like it, so you'll still enduring the test.
- iv. God uses all these for good, but most could either be eliminated or diminished by appropriate steps.

b. God had already tested his faith - 25+ years of testing: leave your homeland & go to a place you've never been; waited for his child; circumcision; protection from foreign kings; I don't know of one test, except the cross, that is more intense than this one.

c. I say this b/c I believe that our faith is tested based upon our level of maturity or where God sees our level of maturity will be; don't test a first grader like a sophomore. The stronger the person's faith the stronger the test...Abr had a strong faith.

- i. `Jesus endured the ultimate test ... taking upon human flesh, feeling the full brunt of sin; being separated from His Father; receiving punishment for our sin; Js suffered the greatest test and had the greatest faith of all.

ii. Thank God for the test you find yourself in

d. God's test reveal your heart devotion...it forces us to see what's inside...it's the crucible (Marine training)

- e. test strip us of our comforts & false substitutes
 - f. James 1.2–4; 1 P.1.6f. – Trials reveal the sincerity of our faith and make us mature. The Parables of the Seeds – Mt.13.20f.
- B. God decides when the test is over! (22.10–12)
- a. He might have been thinking at different stages in the journey that God would stop him...
 - i. Appl – Haven't you been there? God I can't take any more...the Lord takes you to the very edge of sanity...rejection...annihilation...giving up
 - b. How could Abraham endure it? Heb.11.19 – Abr figured God could raise the dead. His mind was on what God could do rather than on what God wasn't doing – God you aren't stopping this... you must not be a good God...
 - c. It's sometimes over when there's no resistance! Just think if he had resisted at some point. Resisting only makes it worse...both active & passive resistance
- C. God will provide a way out (22.13–14)
- a. He decides what it is as well...a ram for Abr. Look at how God provided a way out up to this point in the history – Adam & Eve; Noah; Lot's family.
 - b. This is the one we think we have some control over...the pleasant end to the movie. The Israelites still had to walk through the parted Red Sea, fight the inhabitants of the land, depend daily upon God for enough food, etc.
 - c. Some of us wouldn't want to kill the ram. "It's too hard...messy..." We whine and complain, b/c we don't like the way out. But, it's God's way out!
 - d. 1 Cor.10.13
 - e. Appl – Is there anyone who can stand up a say, "My God has provided for me." When I didn't think I had enough money...needed direction...filled with hopelessness...needed peace...sickness...child living in rebellion.
 - f. Illustration – story
- D. The test is not only for your benefit, but for those around you. (22.15–18)

- a. Abr's victory led to our victory
 - b. When you past the test (or enduring the test) I draw comfort in knowing that my Jesus is real. Validates my faith.
 - c. It encourages me to know that if I ever face the same type of trials God is sufficient...He can give me strength & endurance during the hour of trial.
 - d. Personal stories of church members
 - e. Persecuted believers
- E. This story is a prophetic proclamation of God's eternal provision for mankind through Jesus.
- a. Genesis 22.2 is the John 3.16 of the Old Testament
 - b. Ro.8.32
 - c. God gave His Son as a sacrifice
 - d. Jesus also went to Jerusalem to be a sacrifice
 - e. Jesus placed himself on the cross. He laid down his will to his father's will.
 - f. Jesus knew the Father would raise him from the dead.
 - g. The Father dealt the death blow
 - h. Now we are heirs of the promises of God
 - i. When you look at the cross, you see Jehovah Jireh. God has provided a Lamb.