

Sacrifice Anticipated

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Date: 16 July 2014

Preacher: Lee Roberts

[0:00] Tonight and next week we are going to be in Genesis and we're going to look at an episode! each week from the life of Isaac. In addition to being actual events, each event actually looks forward to something else.

And tonight's lesson is primarily going to be in Genesis 22 verses 1-14. But we need to look at some other passages in Genesis to set some of the background before we get there. So turn first to Genesis 15 verses 1-6. And we'll read Genesis 15 verses 1-6.

And of course this is when we first start meeting Abram and at that time he's still Abram. And so 15 verses 1-6 say this, they say, After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram and said, Do not be afraid Abram, I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward. But Abram said, Lord God what will you give me, seeing I go childless and the heir of my house is Eleazar of Damascus. Then Abram said, Look, you have given me no offspring, indeed one born in my house is my heir. And behold the word of the Lord came to him saying, This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir. Then he brought him outside and said, Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them. And he said to him, So shall your descendants be. And he believed in the Lord, and he accounted it to him for righteousness. So then if we move ahead to chapter 16, we know that Abraham and Sarah got a little impatient and they took things in their own hands. And Abram had a son named Ishmael by Hagar, his servant. That wasn't what God had in mind, though. And so we're going to skip all the way to Genesis 17 and look at Genesis 17, 1-5. Genesis 17, 1-5 say, When Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, I am Almighty God, walk before me and be blameless, and I will make my covenant between me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.

Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations.

[2:42] Notice the tense of the last part of verse 5 there. God said, For I have made you a father, a father of many nations. God was so sure of the outcome that he spoke of it just as if it already happened, even though at that time it was still in the future. So that brings us to the first section of the lesson, and we're still not in Genesis 22 yet. We're going to be still in Genesis 17, but slide down a few verses to Genesis 17, 15-19, and there we're going to see an unexpected announcement. So for those of you filling in the blanks, unexpected announcement is what goes in that first section. So let's read about that unexpected announcement now. Again, this is Genesis 17, 15-19.

Then God said to Abraham, As for Sarai, your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarai shall be your name. And I will bless her, and also give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations. Kings of peoples shall be from her.

Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child? And Abraham said to God, O that Ishmael might live before you. Then God said, No, Sarah, your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him.

So Abraham left because it seemed so incredible that a barren nine-year-old woman could actually give birth to a son. And Abraham had assumed that his descendants would come through Ishmael, but God assured him that Sarah would bear a son, and that son's name was to be called Isaac. And Isaac means he laughs. So his name then would be a constant reminder that Abraham laughed at the word from God. But Abraham was not the only one to laugh at the unexpected announcement, though, because when God returned to restate his promise, Sarah also laughed.

Flip over to Genesis 18 and find verses 10 through 14. So again, this is Genesis 18, 10 through 14. It says, And he said, I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son. Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age, and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my Lord being old also? And the Lord said to Abraham, Why did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old? Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son. Remember verse 14 there. Look at that verse again. Of course, this is God speaking, and he said, Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son. So in the second section of the study tonight, we finally get to Genesis 21, so it's not quite where we're going to be spending most of our time. But if you flip over to Genesis 21, verses 1-7, you'll see an unusual birth.

[6:17] So unusual birth, then, is the second section of the lesson. And again, these are verses 1-7. And the Lord visited Sarah as he had said, And the Lord did for Sarah as he had spoken. For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.

And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac. Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. Now Abraham was 100 years old when his son Isaac was born to him. And Sarah said, God has made me laugh, and all who hear will laugh with me. She also said, Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? For I have born him a son in his old age.

So you'll notice what I put in your handout there. The verb visit in verse 1 is really an extraordinary choice here, because it means that the Lord entered directly into the affairs of his people. So this is what he did for Sarah, and he did it exactly as he said, exactly as he had spoken. And so these two phrases speak of the exact fulfillment of his promise to Abraham that he made in 1721, and that he repeated to Sarah then in 1814 that we looked at earlier. So think about the twist we have here. At one time, Abraham had laughed at the improbability of having a son in his old age, and Sarah had also laughed as well. But now with the birth of the child, they're laughing again, but this time the laughter took on a happier meaning because they were happy that they had a son, and Sarah actually got the joke then that was part of the whole episode.

So that brings us finally to our main focal passage in Genesis 22. And in 22, 1 through 10, we'll see the third section of the lesson, and that is the chosen sacrifice. So chosen sacrifice is what fits in your blank there. And here are verses 1 and 2 first. It says, Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham and said to him, Abraham, and he said, Here I am. 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, which I shall tell you. So this was not a temptation, but instead God was examining Abraham's heart.

And this is where we do have a cross-reference to James that we've been studying recently, because remember, God does not tempt anyone, but he does test people. And the particular form of the verb, tested, makes this phrase a summary of the whole passage, and it really clarifies the meaning of the events, because the genuineness of Abraham's obedience to God is what's being tested. And so it's not unknown for God to test individuals, but the testing has to be clearly distinguished from tempting, because like we said, and like what James said in James 1.13, God doesn't tempt anyone to do evil, but he does test the commitment of people. So think about that for a second. Did God know whether Abraham would pass the test before he initiated the test? Certainly, God knows everything, so he knew Abraham was going to pass the test. So what was the purpose of the test then, if you already knew what the outcome was going to be?

[9:52] To prove the test of him, to what? Abraham proved to Abraham not to. Exactly. It's to prove to Abraham the depth of his faith, so that Abraham really knows that he truly trusts in God. Look again at verse 2. It says, 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, which I shall tell you. So we read earlier about Abraham's other son, Ishmael. So we need to think a little bit about what God means when he refers to Isaac as Abraham's only son. And it really goes back to the meaning of the original word that's translated only son there, because that word actually means uniquely born.

So only Isaac was uniquely born. And the same idea is in the description of Jesus as the only begotten son when John refers to Jesus in John 1.18. And in fact, the Greek term for only begotten is used to describe Isaac as well in Hebrews 11.17. So the point is, not that Abraham lacked other children. The point was that Isaac was the unique child in whom all the promises that God made were going to come true. So if you didn't already know the story, how would you expect Abraham to react to God's request to sacrifice Isaac?

He'd kill or be kidding. Exactly. Great interpretation. Certainly, he was thinking, you've got to be kidding. Probably a whole lot worse thing than that. Well, that's where you can tell your God anyway.

But, you know, obviously obeying God's command would mean killing Isaac, who's now over 20 years old, based upon the time that's passed, and with that likely ending the promise of the Abrahamic covenant. So such action would seem irrational, but Abraham obeyed. Look at verses 3 through 5 of chapter 22. It says, 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. Then on the third day, Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said to his young men, Stay here with the donkey. The lad and I will go yonder and worship, and he will come back to you. Abraham sounds like he might be from Texas with the, We'll go yonder and worship over there. His response was staggering, though, because he gave, apparently, instant, unquestioning obedience there. Notice, it doesn't say anything about Abraham trying to argue with God or anything. In fact, he even got an early start, because it says he arose early in the morning. But picture yourself with Abraham and Isaac on the three-day journey to Mount Moriah. What do you think that journey must have been like? Probably wasn't a lot of talking on Abraham's part during that journey.

[12:54] And to give you an idea, that was a 50-mile journey. So for somebody on foot, especially carrying wood and other elements for the sacrifice, it wouldn't be an easy journey.

Even if you're 121 years old. Yes. Exactly. Especially if you're 121 years old and about to kill your son that's supposed to be the heir of promise for you. And notice all the detail that we have in the verses, because it even mentions wood. So that is a little bit of an irony, because it shows all of the preparations that Abraham made for the sacrifice, but it really points out the absence of the all-important sacrificial subject itself. But in fact, unknown to others, Abraham really does bring the sacrificial lamb with him. And of course, in his mind, that is Isaac. Look at verse 5 again. It says, 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. So we will come back to you there, conveys Abraham's reliance on God to make good on his prior promise. Because the provisions of servants, donkey, and prepared wood for the trip indicate that Abraham is really wealthy. But nobody could replace Isaac, of course, who was his most precious possession, if you want to call him a possession there. Certainly the most precious thing in his life, probably. We've alluded to Hebrews 11, 17 a couple of times, but listen to Hebrews 11, 17 through 19, because they reveal that Abraham was so confident in the permanence of God's promise, he believed that if Isaac were killed, God would raise him from the dead, or that God would provide a substitute for Isaac. So again, this is Hebrews 11, 17 through 19.

It says, 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, And 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. And so, of course, that also is the verse 2, which refers to Isaac as the only begotten son, just like Jesus was referred to the only begotten son in John 1, 18. So Abraham, we learn from Hebrews, actually believed that God would either raise Isaac up or provide a substitute. But let's go back to Genesis and continue the narrative about Isaac, because in the next section of the lesson, verses 6 through 10 of chapter 22, we see an obedient son. So if you're following along in the handout, obedient son is the next section. And this is where things really start to get interesting on their journey. So starting in verse 6 of chapter 22, it says, 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. But Isaac spoke to Abraham, his father, and said, My father. And he said, Here I am, my son. Then he said, and of course this is Isaac, Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering. So the two of them went together. 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. And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. So obviously, Isaac was pretty sharp because he figured out an important piece was missing, at least from his perspective. What question does he ask his father there? And notice something else, too, about that. Who's actually carrying the wood to be used for the sacrifice? Isaac is carrying the wood that's going to be used for the sacrifice. Thinking about the question there that he asked, how does Abraham answer the question about who's going to provide the lamb or what is the lamb? God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering. Yep. He said, My son, God will provide for himself the lamb.

[17:24] And we'll see shortly that Abraham's answer turned out to be even more correct than Abraham knew at the time. And Abraham's answer also proves that Isaac is an obedient son. That's where I got the title of this section from. Because remember that Isaac is over 20 years old at this time. That makes Abraham well over 100. As Mike said, he's over 120. So at this point, Isaac knew that he was planning to be the sacrificial victim. And given that he's 20 and his father is 100 years older, surely he could have run away from his father or overpowered his father if he wanted to. I would think knowing that you're going to be the sacrificial victim would give you some incentive to run pretty fast, especially to outrun a 120 year old trying to chase you down. But what did Isaac do? He actually let his father bind him up and put him on the altar. So, like I said, surely he could have run away from his father, but yet he was willing to do his father's will. So that says a little bit too about how Abraham must have taught

Isaac to trust in God as well. So let's move on to the last section of the passage. And this section is where we see a God-provided substitute. So God-provided substitute is the last section.

And we see that in verses 11 through 14. And 11 through 14 say this, they say, But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, Abraham, Abraham. So he said, Here I am. 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. 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. And Abraham called the name of the place the Lord will provide.

As it is said to this day, In the amount of the Lord it shall be provided. So what happened to stop the sacrifice of Isaac? Wouldn't you have loved to have been Isaac, or at least seen Isaac's reaction when the voice came out and said that there?

[19:49] Obviously God intervened and he intervened very dramatically and instructively. And because he intervened so forcefully, that showed he never intended for Abraham to go through the sacrifice, but that indeed it was a test of Abraham.

So the angel of the Lord stopped Abraham just as Abraham took in his hand the knife to kill Isaac. So now God knew that Abraham would hold nothing back and that he did in fact fear God.

And of course we know from Pastor Don's teaching that to fear God means to revere him and to trust him implicitly and obey him without question. So think about this then.

A true worshiper of God holds nothing back from God, but obediently gives God what he asks, trusting that God will provide. And so the key idea of the entire passage then is summarized in the name that Abraham gave the place, which is the Lord will provide.

So check out something else about verse 14. It's the phrase, as it is said to this day. And on the basis of what happened there, the belief developed that God would provide the sacrifice someday to atone for sin.

[21:01] So it was used as a little bit of an object lesson there. So if we move on to the application, the lessons in this passage are timeless, and they're all about true worship.

First of all, it shows us that faith obeys completely the word of God. So faith obeys completely the word of God. Secondly, faith surrenders the best to God, holding nothing back.

So faith surrenders the best to God, holding nothing back. What do you think goes in the last blank? What waits on the Lord to provide all one's needs? You guys are good.

I put that in there because I know there are some people that love to try to fill out the blanks in advance, so I gave you an easy one there. Faith waits on the Lord to provide all one's needs, but God does not provide until personal sacrifice has been made, and it shows that true worship is costly then.

But this passage does more than just teach about true worship. It also points ahead to other events. So go back through the lesson and look at the section headings again. We talked about an unexpected announcement, an unusual birth, a chosen sacrifice, an obedient son, and also a God-provided sacrifice.

[22:24] And the first four certainly apply to Isaac, but all five apply to somebody else. Who is that somebody else that those five headings apply to? Exactly.

They all apply to Jesus. And we'll quickly go back to the same headings there and compare and contrast Isaac with Jesus. And obviously both Jesus and Isaac were subjects of unexpected announcements, and both also were named during those announcements.

Because in Genesis 17-19 that we looked at earlier, we saw this announcement to Abraham about Isaac. 17-19 said, Then God said, No, Sarah, your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac.

I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him. And then in Luke 1, verses 30-33, Gabriel had this announcement to Mary about Jesus. He said, Then the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Jesus. So notice the name is specified there too.

[23:37] And then going on in Luke 1-32, it says, He will be great and will be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.

So we saw an everlasting covenant then established through Isaac, and now we see an everlasting kingdom established with Jesus. And of course, the angel Gabriel also says that Jesus will reign over the house of Jacob, who of course is Isaac's son, forever.

And now let's look at the similarities between Isaac's and Jesus' unusual births. Because Genesis 21, verses 1 and 2 said this, It says, And the Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as he had spoken.

For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. And earlier tonight, we talked about how the verb visited there speaks of God's direct involvement in Isaac's birth.

If you flip back to Luke 1, and look at verses 34 through 37 in Luke 1, that's where you find Mary's reaction to Gabriel when God told her that she would have a son.

[25:00] Beginning in Luke 1-34, we see this dialogue. Then Mary said to the angel, How can this be, since I do not know a man? And the angel answered and said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the highest will overshadow you.

Therefore also that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age. And this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren.

For with God nothing will be impossible. And we read through Luke 1-37 there, because the wording of verse 37 is reminiscent of what God told Abraham about Isaac's birth.

Listen again to Genesis 18-14 that I pointed out earlier. God said, Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.

So we see there in Genesis, he says, Is anything too hard for the Lord? And then in Luke, when he's talking about Jesus, he says, For with God nothing will be impossible.

[26:05] So another similarity there. And now let's look at how both Isaac and Jesus were chosen sacrifices. In Genesis 22-2, we saw God speaking to Abraham, and that's where he said, 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.

And then, in John 1-29, and again that's John 1-29, we see this about Jesus. And it says, The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

And then in Romans, we have Romans 5, verses 6-9, and these verses say, For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love toward us, and that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us, much more than having now been justified by his blood, and we shall be saved

from wrath through him.

So you can see there how Jesus and Isaac were chosen sacrifices, and they also were both obedient sons. We already talked a little bit about how Isaac surely could have run away from Abraham, but yet he stayed.

[27 : 38] And we've also talked about how Isaac carried the wood to be used for his own sacrifice. And Isaac carrying the wood prefigured Jesus carrying his own cross to be crucified.

So let's spend a couple more minutes to remind ourselves of Jesus' obedience, because in Matthew 26, verses 52-54, we see these words from Jesus after Peter cuts off the ear of the high priest's servant during his arrest.

Again, that's Matthew 26, 52-54. The verses say that Jesus said to him, Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.

Or do you think that I cannot now pray to my Father, and you will provide me with more than twelve legions of angels? How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled that it must happen thus?

So obviously you can see that Jesus is obedient and doing this by his own will, because he acknowledges that he could call twelve legions of angels to rescue him from this predicament.

[28 : 43] But he has to go through with the sacrifice to fulfill the Scriptures. So both of them were obedient sons. And Philippians 2.8 also documents Jesus' obedience.

And Philippians 2.8 says this, It says, And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

But you know, no comparison that we see in the Old Testament is a perfect parallel to what actually happens in the New Testament. And now we get to the point where the comparison between Isaac and Jesus breaks down, because Isaac was spared because of the God-provided sacrifice.

And we've already looked at several verses showing that Jesus was the ultimate God-provided sacrifice. Now let's look at one more passage to illustrate that point.

And it's in your notes as well. It's Hebrews 10, verses 10 through 14. And it says this about Jesus. It says, By that we will have been sanctified through the offering of the blood of Jesus Christ once for all.

[29 : 51] And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till his enemies are made his footstool, for by one offering he has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

So even though the comparison between Isaac and Jesus does differ on this last point, we do have one other similarity here. Because Isaac arose from the place of his expected death to carry out the promise of God.

And Jesus rose from the place of his actual death to carry out the promise of God. So even here you have a little bit of similarity between Isaac and Jesus. So when we have doubts that God will follow through on his promises, we need to remember the opening question of Genesis 18, 14.

And of course that's where God said, Is anything too hard for the Lord? And then also remember how Gabriel responded to Mary's question about Jesus' birth.

That was in Luke 1, 37, where he said, For with God nothing will be impossible. So Isaac, the son of Abraham, was merely a shadow of the better son to come.

[31 : 10] And of course that's where we can all take comfort. Because remember Jesus' own words in John 3, 16 and 17. He said, 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.

For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. Thank you.