

Genesis 22

Faith

Introduction

May I speak in the name of the living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Looking at these 2 scriptures. I felt that God wanted me to talk on Genesis 22.

Why oh why...

I had been wrestling with the passage for a while and decided I needed some expert help- So I asked Toby- What would you have done with this given a blank canvas – he replied

I would have picked another passage!

Maybe I am bit mad? Who knows!

STORY OF A SKI SLOPE

So why? Why is this passage so hard? So controversial- what could we possibly glean from this that would be relevant to us today?

We probably can't talk about this passage without encountering some confusing and troubling thoughts and ideas that are represented.

- Child abuse
- Possibility of the wrongful interpretation and understanding of the passage leading some to believe God might ask them to sacrifice their kids.
- God seemingly not only allowing but asking for child sacrifice. How can we reconcile our image of God with this act that was asked for?
- Or was Abraham deluded? Hearing wrongly?
- Satan possessed Abraham

- This passage too has in my own experience been used to usher people to “give up” things they are close with. In one instance I was talking with a friend when they mentioned that they felt they must give up or indeed sacrifice what they loved most as it had in light of this passage been deemed necessary.

It can be very hard for us to reconcile a God who seemingly demands for the sacrificing of a son to simply fulfil a “test”.

I cannot claim to be able to answer all of these difficult areas of the passage or even to claim I know what God had originally intended with the story.

I hope the way that I look and unpack this passage may help you to understand more of the story, and to explain a bit more of what is going on. Despite our first gut reactions.

When looking at a text in the Bible we have many lenses that we view the text with. This is called hermeneutics.

To put it simply- when we come to a passage in the bible we approach it (generally) in one of several ways- I will look at a few here- **often** we either look at scripture with a hermeneutic of trust or of scepticism.

I would suggest that **rather than** look at this passage with a particular bias we look at this with a something else- a hermeneutic of consistency.

Is God consistent in the bible?

(this does not mean we can make sense of God in every instance right off the bat.)

It means that I need to look at the whole of scripture- and ask what is the dominant view or characteristic of God that I see

From what I see is that the overwhelming view of God is that his actions display that he is abounding in love, slow to anger, patient, and many more.

And when we see Jesus too, we see those same traits physically embodied in Him.

Despite this there are times when it doesn't match up in such times we need to look at the context and try to look deeper to see what might be going on...

--

In light of this I will try to draw something out that I felt was really interesting and perhaps might help with some of those questions.

--

The fact that Abraham was asked to perform an act that was actually against the will of God, (Exodus 20:13 says: "You shall not murder,") raises some difficult questions. Oswald Chambers thinks that Abraham thought he heard God's voice, but he did not hear it clearly. What he pursued was his idea of the will of God. BUT our text does not leave us that option.

God is very specific in His demand. It is impossible to misunderstand who God wanted and what God wanted to be done to him. Verse 2 says: "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about." The only less defined part of the order was the place of sacrifice.

NOT ONLY THAT but

The test does not come to Abraham as an academic question, such as "if you would be requested to do such and such, would you do it?" The devil often uses hypothetical cases to make us afraid. God does not do that. He demands obedience in well defined, specific cases. That is why we should not ask ourselves the question whether we would obey if we were asked to sacrifice one of our children. That would only cause unnecessary inner conflicts. It would also be immoral, because murder is sin.

So why does he go ahead to do this?

His faith-
Which comes from his belief and trust in God.

These are built up and proved to him through his track record with God.

There he is ancient old both him and Sarah past their parenthood age. Yet into this God speaks and provides. He promises him a son.

Note: when Abraham tried to get it his own way it went wrong—

But God was still faithful and provided him a son with Sarah.

So when faced with this question from God- Abraham has more to draw from than just that moment- he has a relationship with God that is build on trust and the fulfilment of a promise.

Not only that but he also holds the promise that God will use Isaac as the start of many generations who will all be blessed.

We know that God does indeed raise people from the dead. In fact there is nothing that God cannot do.

What is your context. You see, from my experience God works within yours, mine and our context. Individually. Within the framework of the relationship we have with him.

[Relate back to my story—](#)

This is Abrahams context- he went into this with his inner logic- God has been consistent with me, he has fulfilled his promises to me and has this big promise about Isaac still standing yet to be fulfilled. Maybe Abraham reckoned that God would not let his son die or that if he was then would be raised from the dead. (expressed in HEB 11).

To me then as I was wrestling with this there seems to at least one satisfactory explanation can be given if we see the whole story in a prophetic perspective.

An amazing detail in God's command is that the sacrifice is specified as a "burnt offering." In Leviticus, we read the stipulations for the burnt offering. The sacrifice could be made of various kinds of animals, such as bulls, rams or doves.

Okay so this bit gets a bit fiddly and complex like a big maze... have you have got lost in a maze? No well try to work out the square root of -1...

Unlike any of the other sacrifices it was to be burnt up completely. The priest was allowed to keep the hide of the animal, but no part of it could be eaten by anybody. Also it had to have no connection with any sin committed. It was the most important of all the five categories of sacrifices that are mentioned in Leviticus, because it was the first of the list. It was "an aroma pleasing to the LORD."

Like all sacrifices it portrayed or pre harkens the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. But the emphasis of this sacrifice was different from the other ones. In three of the five sacrifices there is the feature of forgiveness of sin. The "guilt offering," the "sin offering" and the "fellowship offering" were all connected with the havoc sin had caused in the relationship between God and man.

In the "grain offering" the person who brought the sacrifice recognized God as his Creator and himself as the creature. It was the expression of an act of surrender of the human life that God had made. It said to God "You have the right to my life because You made me!" **But the "burnt offering" has none of these features (this is the kind Abraham was asked of Isaac).** The burnt has nothing to do with any human sin or forgiveness of sin or with any human relationship. It is an expression of an act of surrender that is not of this earth. It is the seal of, what the epistle to the Hebrews calls, "the eternal covenant." In Heb.13:20 we read: "May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep." Before the world began, the Second Person of the Trinity surrendered to the First Person of the Trinity on the basis of eternal love. That is why Jesus is called "the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world." (Rev.13:8)

In asking Abraham to sacrifice his son, his only son, Isaac, whom he loved, God drew Abraham into the mystery of the expression of "agape love" such as cannot be seen on earth. Why?

We grant that Abraham cannot have understood all of this, but there must have been something in the command that lifted his heart above all the reasoning of his head and carried him on a divine cloud those three days on the trail to the place where he saw the Lamb that God had prepared for him. If we leave this divine element out of the story, we are left with an immoral and inhuman trial of natural affections that would have led Abraham beyond the breaking point. God's demand would have been more cruel than the rituals performed for Moloch, and Abraham's obedience would have been an act of insanity.

IN OTHER WORDS he believes that somehow it will be okay. Despite the outlandish request by God.

God called Abraham by his new name "Abraham," which means "father of many nations." This adds another paradox to the call.

Abraham is in many ways asked to put his new name on the altar. If Isaac were dead, this name would have become meaningless. **This fact must also have been an indication to Abraham that God had more in mind than the killing of his son. That is where the writer to the Hebrews must have gotten the idea that Abraham reckoned on a resurrection.** Heb.11:19 says: "Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death."

We read in verse 5: "He said to his servants, 'Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.'" These words can be perceived either as a statement of faith or as an outright lie. Abraham was justified later in the day by the facts, but at this point he had no proof that Isaac would return with him. Yet, because of his faith in God, he was sure. He knew that God is the God of the living, not of the dead; and that God would not kill His own promise.

I think of Jesus' words to His disciples on the eve of His death on the cross. In John 14:18,19 He says: "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live."

Yet Jesus had, humanly speaking, (LOGICALLY SPEAKING) (we know that yes he is God, but if you follow it logically) no more guarantee for His own resurrection than Abraham had for Isaac's. Both must have relied solely on the promise and character of God.

Abraham's attitude is almost as victorious and Jesus.' We tend to think of Abraham as a poor old man, who is tested beyond endurance and for whom the three-day trip to Mount Moriah was sheer torture. Instead, we see a man who is radiant and confident, who practically proclaims victory over death.

Yet, this was the day of Jesus Christ Abraham saw, according to Jesus' words in John 8:56 - "Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad."

He loved his son with his whole heart, he knew that his own place in world history would depend on what happened with his son, but he also knew that there were things beyond that which were of even greater significance than what he could see and touch.

Is Jesus saying that Abraham knew more than is even revealed in the text? Does this prove that the whole passage here is a divine sign and symbolic action pointing to a fuller fulfilling of God original promise to Abraham through Jesus himself?

In vs.12 God's voice cancels the initial command for the sacrifice. "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

SO no, Abraham had not misunderstood God's initial command. True, God had pushed Abraham to the edge of human endurance and beyond and in a spiritual sense the sacrifice had been made, although not physically consummated. It is actually too bad that Abraham lived before Calvary, because this means that he did not fully understand what he was doing when he sacrificed Isaac. [He looked forward to the lamb God would provide; we look back on the Lamb that was slain.](#)

After God has spoken to him for the second time Abraham sees the ram that is caught in the thicket.

He needs no divine revelation to understand that God wants him to sacrifice the lamb instead of his son.

Probably the ram had been there all the time while Abraham was busy building the altar and getting things ready for the sacrifice of Isaac, but he never saw it.

God's provision had been there all the time. For us, for whom this provision has been made before we ever came into this world, the same thing goes; we are often too busy to see it.

It was only after God had spoken to me, that I realized that no sacrifice on my part was needed, certainly, then there is no need for us to make the sacrifice that Abraham did, because God had provided one already for me and for each of you.