
SG020112

The Whole Counsel of God – Genesis 22-23

Got questions? Email Pastor Jason at jasonduff7@gmail.com

(You can download this message as a pod cast by searching Jason Duff on I-Tunes)

Introduction & Overview of the Section

Introduction

This week we basically come to the end of the life of Abraham, even though his death is not recorded until chapter 25, the focus of Genesis changes to Abraham's son Isaac in chapter 24. We see in chapters 22-23 the pinnacle of Abraham's life of faith as he passes two major tests from the Lord.

Abraham's Two Major Tests – Genesis 22-23

#1 – The offering of his son – Genesis 22

Abraham faces the greatest test of his life as God asks him to sacrifice his promised son Isaac on an altar. As we look at this difficult test we see what is important when facing trials in our lives and how we can be a picture of God especially in our toughest moments.

#2 – The death of his wife – Genesis 23

In chapter 23 Abraham loses his wife of well over 100 years. How Abraham deals with this trial helps us understand how we are to biblically deal with grief in our lives.

Key Issues or Words

“Love” (22:2) – This is the first mention of the word, “love” in the Bible. Scholars have something they call the “Law of first mention” that says that the first time a word is used in the scripture it sets the tone for the meaning of that word in the rest of the scripture. If that is so, then this first mention of love is in the context of a Father's love for his son especially in the context of offering him up. What a picture this is of real love for us, the Father's love for His son Jesus.

By the way...

Genesis 22:6 – “the wood... laid on his son” – The Genesis Rabbah, a pre-Christian Jewish Midrash, commented that “Isaac with the wood on his back was like a condemned man carrying his own cross”. Even non believing Jews see the picture of Jesus in Isaac.

Going Deeper

(think it over yourself or discuss with the family)

Questions for the all of us...

#1 – Why do you think God allows trials in our lives? What is He trying to accomplish?

#2 – How does Abraham respond to the grief of losing his wife? What does this teach us about the right way and the wrong way to grieve?

Further study...

How many pictures of the Jesus being offered by His Father on the cross can you find in Genesis 22?

Homework 4 Next Week – Read Genesis 24

W020111 – 11/28/12
Genesis 22-23
“Dealing with God’s Tests”

Introduction

- Tonight we are going to continue our study in the foundational book of the Old Testament and really all of the Bible
 - Remember the content is not hard to remember, because the title says it all

The word Genesis means “beginnings”

- And truly so many things in scripture have their beginning in the book of Genesis
 - The universe
 - Life in general
 - Man, marriage
 - Sin and evil
 - Language, government, nations
 - Specifically we will see the nation of Israel
- In fact understanding that this book means and is about beginnings really is a good way to divide up our look at this book as you can see in your book intro sheet

Outline for the Book of Genesis

Chapters 1-11 – The Beginning of all nations

- **Chapters 1-2 – The Creation**
- **Chapter 3 - 5 – The Fall**
- **Chapter 6-9 – The Flood**
- **Chapters 10-11 – The Tables of Nations**

Chapters 12-50 – The Beginning of the Jewish nation

- **Chapters 12-23 – Abraham**
- **Chapters 24-27 – Isaac**
- **Chapters 28-36 – Jacob**
- **Chapters 37-50 – Joseph**

Well tonight we are really going to finish up our study on the Life of Abraham

- His death is not recorded until chapter 25, but in chapter 24 the focus really begins to shift to the life of Isaac
 - And so we will start that two weeks from tonight
- But tonight as we get come the pinnacle, the crescendo of Abraham’s life, his ultimate tests of faith
 - That by the way, I am going to ruin the ending for you – He passes the test
 - Two major test in our text tonight for Abraham

Abraham’s Two Major Tests – Genesis 22-23

Test #1 – Offering of his son – Genesis 22

Test #2 – Death of his wife – Genesis 23

- And what major tests these really were
 - I mean consider the stark contrast between chapter 21 and 22

- As Chapter 21 ends – Abraham and Sarah had received the promised son Isaac, the one they had waited for, for 25 years
- They dealt with the mistakes of Hagar and Sarah
- Abraham deals with Abimelech without lying about his wife, without being the flesh, he gets a chance to be used of the Lord in his life
- And the chapter comes to a close, Abraham plants a tree in worship to God, and his family, his beloved wife, his promised son, without any distractions, God had given Abraham rest from all of his enemies, so now they are sitting around the tree, worshipping God and loving one another, full of wealth and blessings – what an idyllic picture chapter 21 ends with

➤ And then you have the stark words that open up chapter 22 – kill your son

What is God doing? Why is He doing it? What are this test and this trial for?

- well I believe as we take time tonight to consider how Abraham handled this trial and the death of his wife in chapter 23, we get answers to all of these questions
 - and answers to why God does the same things in our lives as well
 - so if you are taking notes tonight – 4 things to consider when facing tests and trials from the Lord

4 things to consider when facing tests from the Lord

#1 – Expect tests from God – Genesis 22:1-3

- part of walking with God is to realize that God tests us
 - some of us think – why, why would He do it
- well tests can be a good thing
 - I fly a lot and I am really glad they tests those airplanes every time
- I get bummed at delays – American Airlines has the most flights between California and Dallas, but a report came out in USA Today this Monday, they are the most delayed Airline in America, congrats and I can tell you that is true – I can't stand delays
 - Delays for weather, delays when they are holding the plane for a flight where a bunch of connections are coming to us, I think lets go (I'm so considerate)
 - Delays because the pilots didn't get a full hour off between flights, I can't stand delays
- But when something doesn't pass a safety test and that is why the flight is delayed, I don't get upset and think lets just go
 - No – test the plane, do it, lets make sure this thing works, that is good thing

Tests show us the work the God has done, they give us an ability to minister to others, they give us a heart for heaven – so much happens in trials

- And realizing that, God sees that there are times to strengthen us as believers by using tests
 - And understanding that helps, but it does not lessons the tough experience each trial, each test is
 - This is real stuff Abraham is going through

Moses, the author of Genesis, uses the phrase, “God tested Abraham” – but that is just to soften the blow to the reader

- Abraham had no idea this was a test, it is only a test
 - Abraham just gets the raw command of God
 - Take your son and offer him as a burnt sacrifice

Now again, because most of us know the end of the story, because most of us know God doesn't make him go through with it, we forget what this meant to Abraham

- Abraham was well familiar with the process of offering a burnt sacrifice
 - The first things you would do, would be to cut the throat of your offering, bleeding the offering to death
 - Next would come the dismemberment of the sacrifice, cutting the body in pieces
 - Then those pieces would be assembled on an alter and the body parts would be lit on fire and burned to ash
 - I don't know what you have in mind when you read Genesis 22, but this is the horror that Abraham had in mind, he was going to have to do to his own son

And I think it is also critical that we understand this was not out of the sphere of experience for Abraham

- He was not only super familiar with animal sacrifices, he had done that 100's maybe thousands of times
 - but human sacrifice was normal in UR where Abraham grew up, where he spent most of his adult life and human sacrifice was normal in the Canaanite culture in which we now lived
- Abraham did not have the Torah, where his worldview of God could be shaped, where he knew this was not God's heart as we do when we read
 - All Abraham had was the bare word of God – Go, Take, Son, Sacrifice – that is the coldness of the Hebrew command

Abraham had to be distraught

- we get some indication that He was from verse 3, where it says he saddled his donkey and then cut the word
 - Hebrews scholars point out that the order of this is illogical
 - You would not put the saddle on the animals and then let them sit saddled up while you still have preparation chores to do
- It is like telling your kids to go potty for a long car trip and then packing, you parents know that is not the logical order
 - But when all been in a distracted state, trying to get ready for something and everything just seems to be done out of order
 - That is the indication of the text – Abraham is distraught

He is distraught, because he loves his son

- I totally understand, I love my kids
- I love my son – we drove up to my Aunt and Uncles were the family was all meeting in Reno

And if you have ever driven the 5 or the 99 up through the Central Valley of California, then you know there is a lot of farms and sometimes a cattle farms, just acres of cows

- the smell is not that great

- and I was pointing that out as we were driving and my son from the back seat says, “Oh that looks like heaven”
- Heaven? – I wondered, I don’t picture heaven as a smelly cow farm – just not my picture, so I asked, why is that like heaven son
 - His response – Look at all that steak!!!
 - Oh – yes, that’s my boy – look at all that steak
 - I love my son, I love my kids, I love my family
 - I can’t image what Abraham is feeling
 - He loves his son – in fact

Verse two contains the first mention of the word “Love” in the Bible

- and that is significant because Bible scholars have something called the Law of first mention that we have talked about before
 - and what that means is the first time something is mentioned in the Bible, it sets the tone for the meaning or the concept of that word for the rest of the Bible
- And I find that very interesting because here the first mention of love is a Father’s love for His only son, in the context of giving Him up
 - Not boy meets girl - Not the love of money
 - The true picture of love is Father’s love for His son in context of giving Him up
- The true picture is God’s love that He had for His son, in giving Him up because He loved you and He loved me - That is a real picture of love
 - Well as hard as it was, Abraham obeys...

4 things to consider when facing tests from the Lord

#1 – Expect tests from God – Genesis 22:1-3

#2 – Focus on the promises not the explanations – Genesis 22:4-14

- How in the world did Abraham get through this?
 - I think the indication of the text is when Abraham didn’t understand the circumstances or the heart of God he focused on God’s promises
 - You see sometimes what we see and perceive God is doing doesn’t make any sense

Sometimes in talking to people you get the impression that God always makes sense in their lives

- He never asks them to do anything crazy, He always explains Himself fully, giving the 5 year and 10 year plan
 - Now I don’t know how they got to be so lucky, but all I know is that is not how God works with me
- And that is not what I see in the scripture
 - God seems to be always asking, always doing something that makes very little sense to my puny brain
 - And that is why we must focus on the promise, not on the explanation, because we might not get an explanation until we get to heaven

And we see that in Abraham’s life in this story

- Verse 5 - He tells the men to wait here and the lad and I will return
 - There is no indication that Abraham is lying, He believes somehow God will keep His promises and return Isaac to him

That is not just me making that conclusion that is what the Bible tells us
“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, “In 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.” – Hebrews 11:17-19

- God had told him that He was going to be the Father of many nations
 - God told him that that would happen through Isaac and so now God was telling Him to sacrifice His son – in Abraham’s mind – God had a problem, but God would some how solve it
- And I believe friends then when we are faced with what we don’t understand we must fall back on what we do
 - Lord I know you love me
 - I know your thoughts toward me are good, to give me a future and a hope
 - So Lord I am going to lean on that right now, because this trial, this test makes no sense

4 things to consider when facing tests from the Lord

#1 – Expect tests from God – Genesis 22:1-3

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#3 – Remember the “why” of trials – Genesis 22:15-24

- There is always something on the other side of a trial
 - There is always an after to the tests and trial

One of my favorite phrases in the Bible is “it came to pass”

- Trials happen, tests happen, but someday they too will come to pass and we will be on the other side of the trial
 - And this is important to keep in mind for this truth will encourage you to press on
- Knowing reward and fruit from lessons learned is on the other side

God is working, in us through trials, Job, who knew something about trials, says...

“But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10).

- Abraham is test, and he comes for as gold, and God blessing upon Him pours forth
 - For Abraham this was a reiterating of the promise, because you have not held your son back from me, I am going to multiply your descendants like the starts of heaven or the sands of the sea

Now by the way – many years ago critics of the Bible used to mock this and say which one is it – the stars or the sand

- You see science used to teach there were only just above 6,000 stars in the universe
 - And there were obviously more sands on the seashore than that
 - So oh contradictions in the Bible???
- But then we invented this little thing called a telescope and guess what
 - They new estimate is there are 10 to the 25th power stars in the universe

Now scientist have also measured how many grains of sand are in a square foot box, and then multiplied it by the size of the earth and guess what – they estimate that there are 10 to the 25th power grains of sand on earth - Funny how God knew that all along
But personally I think the greatest blessing from this trial was not just something that happened in Abraham’s heart, but something that happened in Isaac’s heart

- you see back in verse 1, it says God was tested Abraham
 - But have you ever considered, tested him for what reason?
 - Did Abraham not know He had faith – I mean I guess that is possible, but Abraham had passed some pretty significant trials in the past
 - Leaving his home at age 75, trust God for 25 years for a son
 - Believing that he and his barren wife of 90 years old were going to have children – Abraham had faults, but he also had a lot of faith
- Was it Abraham’s faith that was being tested?
 - Was it God not know what Abraham’s faith was like? – of course not – God knew exactly what was in Abraham’s heart
 - So who is the test really for???

Well some translations prefer the word – God “proved” Abraham instead of God tested Abraham, and personally I like that translation, because I think God was proving Abraham’s faith

- But not for Abraham’s sake, and not for God’s sake
 - I personally think it was for Isaac’s sake
- Remember up to this point – God has been the God of Abraham
 - But He will become the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
 - The faith of Abraham needs to be proved and passed on to Isaac and then from Isaac to Jacob
- So often that happens as our kids go through trials with us

I remember growing up – my family had lots of money when I was little, but by the time I was in junior high because of my Dad had devastated the family business and left my Mom we were in a much lower income bracket

- My Mom was a single mom – and I remember being the only man in the house, her crying over bills that she couldn’t pay, rent that she didn’t have
 - And I also remember God always coming through
 - And as a young man – that built my faith, to see my Mom trust God when things looked bad
 - Faith was transferred to the next generation
- You see the trials you face are not just for you – they are for you to trust the Lord and when your kids are watching, pass on your faith to them
 - This is so important as we go through trials
 - It is not just for you, others are watching
 - And though our flesh wants to shake our fist at the heavens and get mad – We need to realize our neighbors, our kids, our coworkers are watching us go through this trial
 - And they know what is like in their heart with no faith, when a loved one dies, they know what it is like in their heart when the bills are piling up, they know in their heart what it is like when the doctor says cancer

- But they are watching what happens in your heart – I think we need to take that to heart

One thing I believe God is doing in Abraham’s heart in this trial, another “why” to the trials, is God is helping him to keep his focus on the giver not the gift

- we can have such trouble with this
 - We love the gifts God sends our way

The beautiful creation all around us – I can get so focused on the creation instead of the creator

- He give us family, we love our families
 - He gives us relationship
 - He gives us jobs or ministries
 - And those can each be wonderful gifts
- But those gifts can, if we are not careful, become more important to us that the Giver Himself
 - And sometimes when God begins to detect that in our hearts
 - He has lay those things down on the alter
- Not often by our own choice
 - But sometimes because of sickness
 - Sometimes that girls says back sand
 - Sometimes we loose that job or that ministry and God wants to know if we are willing to take those things that are so dear to our hearts and trust that He knows best

You see the greatest candidate for idols in our lives are those things which are closest to our hearts

- And as wonderful as family, friendship, relationships or even ministry can be
 - When it becomes an idol, it becomes as dangerous to our wicked hearts as anything ever worshiped or called god by mankind
 - So when it comes time, to lay something near and dear to you on the alter – you trust God precious men and women
- Because there is a why to that trial and more than that, there is another side – where blessing will come, faith will transfer, and you will come forth as God

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#3 – Remember the “why” of trials – Genesis 22:15-24

#4 – Seek to glorify the Lord – Genesis chapter 23

- In chapter 23 Abraham faces His second trial and that is the death of His wife
 - And His reaction I believe is one that glorifies the Lord

What was it about His reaction?

Well first of all Abraham mourns

- I point this out because this is normal

- But so often we live in a culture that tells us, if you are real Christian you will “put on joy brother”
- If someone tell you that after you have lost a loved one – you have my permission to punch them in the mouth
- Listen it is true they your loved one, if they knew the Lord, they are in heaven and you will see them again – that is why Paul the apostle says,

“We sorrow, but not as those without hope” – I Thessalonians 4:13

- and they are in heaven, in perfection with Jesus, that is why you should not be sad for them, say as in the lost of a baby or young person, oh they missed out on so much
 - We have different ideas than God
- But that said, it is okay to be sad on our part because we will miss the person that has gone on before us.

Abraham was a great man of faith, and oh he knew he would see Sarah again, He knows she is being blessed

- But He still mourns and weeps for his loss
 - never feel like you can’t be sad,
 - the first mention of the word “mourn” in the scriptures is in this context, not God over sin, but the loss of a loved one

Abraham mourns and then Abraham moves on

- After the time of morning, which is normal, natural, and needed, Abraham then moves on to what God is doing next – and glorifies the Lord, not being bitter at God and short with people like sometimes happens
 - We don’t mourn as those with no hope – we know we will see our loved ones again
- So Abraham moves on and finds a place to bury his wife

We are not going to spend much time here because what it basically shows is an insight into property dealings at the time of Abraham

- They would offer to give it, which if accepted would have been like stealing
 - So instead what they were hoping for is a haggle over the price – these cultures love that

The first time I went to Israel in Bible College I wanted to buy a Yasser Arafat hat for my stepdad, because it just fit so well. My friend had bought one for \$5 and so I went into the Muslim quarter to get one. The man first said his price was 120 dollars, I laughed told him I would pay 5 and He spit at me, and yelled. So I left and he said, “come back” 50 dollars – I said \$5 and he spit at me again and said, you insult me. So I left and he said “come back” – 20 dollars – and I said, I will give you 10 – and I waited for the spit, but instead he said, ah you are stealing it for 10 dollars, but okay – steal from me \$10 and I walked away with a hat - They love to haggle.

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This is what I think the Hittites wanted, because the price they were asking for was exorbitant

- King David paid 50 Shekels of silver for what would become the temple mount, hundreds of years later, and land gets more expensive with time
 - The Hittites ask 400 for a cave in the middle of nowhere, not for property in the middle of Jerusalem

- But in chapter 23 we see Abraham simply paying the price, and getting the cave which Sarah, and he, and Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob, and Leah would be buried
 - Not fighting, not trying to get the best for himself
 - Just realizing that this world and its wealth is not his home

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- and then you will be a picture of God in your trials
- He was a picture of the Lord
 - And the whole thing is a picture of what God will do later with His only son
 - Notice with me these and we will be done

7 pictures from Genesis 22

#1 – “your only son” – Verse 2

- now this was not Abraham’s only son, you remember Abraham had a son by the name of Ishmael
 - but as we have talked about before, verse 2 here speaks to the fact that God doesn’t recognize the works of the flesh

And more than that – I believe God says it this way on purpose

- For He would someday, offering His only son, who He loved for you and for me

7 pictures from Genesis 22

#1 – “your only son” – Verse 2

#2 – “The lad” – Verse 5

- many of us picture a little boy – that is what we were taught in Sunday School
 - but that is not true
 - The Hebrew word means “young man’ – and if you add up the years, Isaac is most likely around age 30 at this point
- Which on one hand, I am really blessed that the Bible considers someone in their 30’s a young man
 - But I think the real point is Jesus was right about the same age as Isaac when His father offered him for you and for me

7 pictures from Genesis 22

#1 – “your only son” – Verse 2

#2 – “The lad” – Verse 5

#3 – “3 Days” – Verse 4

- We all know that Jesus in was in the grave for 3 days and 3 nights – Matthew 12:40
 - Well again the parallels here – this was a three day journey that Abraham and Isaac were on
 - It was 3 days from the time that God said sacrifice your son, until God gave him back
- And so in very real since in Abraham’s mind, his son was dead 3 days and then given back to him

7 pictures from Genesis 22

#1 – “your only son” – Verse 2

#2 – “The lad” – Verse 5

#3 – “3 Days” – Verse 4

#4 – “God will provide Himself” – Verse 8

In verse 8 Isaac asked a very important question

- hey Dad, I see the wood, I see that big knife in your hand, but where is the sacrifice that we are going to offer
 - and Abraham says something so interesting to me
 - in the New King James – God will provide for Himself a sacrifice
- but the King James Version I believe sums up true indication of the text

“God will provide Himself a lamb” – Genesis 22:8 (King James Version)

- I believe Abraham was not just arresting the fears of his son, but was speaking prophetically of one day when God would provide Himself as a lamb for our sins

7 pictures from Genesis 22

#1 – “your only son” – Verse 2

#2 – “The lad” – Verse 5

#3 – “3 Days” – Verse 4

#4 – “God will provide Himself” – Verse 8

#5 – “The wood...laid on his son” – Verse 6

- Just like Jesus carried the cross
 - So Isaac carried the wood that he was to be sacrificed upon
- In The Genesis Rabbah, a pre-Christian Jewish Midrash, commented that **“Isaac with the wood on his back was like a condemned man carrying his own cross” – Genesis Rabbah (a pre-Christian Jewish Midrash)**
 - Even Jewish scholars see the picture, without believe the truth

7 pictures from Genesis 22

#1 – “your only son” – Verse 2

#2 – “The lad” – Verse 5

#3 – “3 Days” – Verse 4

#4 – “God will provide Himself” – Verse 8

#5 – “The wood...laid on his son” – Verse 6

#6 – “The two of them went together” – Verse 8

- remember this is not a little kid, and Abraham was old, Isaac was most likely in his early 30's
 - meaning he cover easily over power the old man
 - He could have out run the old man
 - I think for me, if that had happened, it would have been my cue that it was time to move out – the old man is crazy – I'm moving out
- But what it really shows is Isaac was a willing sacrifice just like Jesus
 - God the Father was forcing God the Son
 - Jesus loves us with all His heart, enough to die in our place

7 pictures from Genesis 22

#1 – “your only son” – Verse 2

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#4 – “God will provide Himself” – Verse 8

#5 – “The wood...laid on his son” – Verse 6

#6 – “The two of them went together” – Verse 8

#7 – “In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided” - Verse 14

You see I am convinced that the very place where Abraham offered Isaac was the place where another Father would offer His son, yet He did not stop it

- you see the Mountains of Moriah is where Jerusalem sits today – God send Abraham to Jerusalem to offer his son
 - The place one would offer a sacrifice would be at the tallest point of the point where you had a little flat area – that was the normal procedure for offering sacrifices

Now the Jewish people will tell you that it was on the temple mount, which was why they put the temple there

- That right where the old holy of holies was, is the exact spot where Isaac was offered
 - Now it is true that the Temple Mount in Jerusalem is the highest spot you could build a temple
- But geological studies of the region show that highest place with a flat plateau, the Abraham would have recognized as a high place, he could build a small alter, is actually a few hundred yards away
 - Just outside the current city of Jerusalem, the place is now called Golgotha, the place of the skull or Calvary – where Jesus was crucified

You see Abraham offers his all to the Lord and in that He becomes a picture of God

- And I close with this tonight so we will all consider What is the picture you and I give out
 - The Lord told Moses He was, “merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth,
 - I Thess tell us “The Lord is faithful”
 - Isaiah tells us “He is holy and pure”
 - Is that a picture of you and me?????

In Contrast, The word describes the world as in II Timothy chapter 3...

“Lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power.” – II Timothy 3:2-5

- That is a picture of the world

And my question is what do we more reflect?