

Genesis 22:1-24

Christ has said "**In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.**"

But sometimes God actually *sends* tribulation to test our faith.

When He does that, you can be sure He only has our good in mind.

Unlike Satan, He wants us to pass the test and go on to the next grade.

He wants us to reach a higher level in our walk of faith.

He wants us to become more like Christ.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Although Abraham had failed the Lord at times, he had also achieved some great victories of faith.

Yes, as Abraham's faith increased, God had given him his mid-term exams, and he had passed them.

By now he had been victorious over covetousness, the fear of the four kings, and his parental attachment to the son of the bondwoman.

And these tests had provided Abraham with the opportunity to solidify his faith. This is very important, for James 2:17 tells us "**-- faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.**"

So after years of honing Abraham's faith to a fine edge, God was now ready to give him his final exams.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Genesis 22:1-2 "**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."

The word "**tempt**" which we see in V 1 is a translation of the Hebrew word "nasah," which more correctly means to test or to try.

And in this case it was to be the ultimate test.

God would lay his hand on Abraham's most precious possession.

"Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest."

Yes, it seemed like a cruel test, but it was necessary.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

God called Isaac "**thine only son.**"

In reality he *should* have been the only son,
and as far as God was concerned he was
the only son, a type of His own Son.

Also, God readily acknowledged the severity
of this test, for He called Isaac--the
son "**whom thou lovest.**"

Yes, Abraham was being called upon to lay
his own heart upon the altar.

And herein we see a glimmer of the other
great purpose in this test.

Not only was Abraham's heart to be tested,
but it was to foreshadow the very heart
of God.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

In Isaiah 53, Psalm 22, and Psalm 69, the
Holy Spirit reveals what Calvary *meant*
to Christ.

But in Genesis 22, we get a glimpse of what
Calvary meant to His Heavenly Father.
Yes, the events in this chapter foreshadow
the cross from God's point of view.
For Abraham, this was the supreme test, but
it was also a supreme privilege that no
other man would share.

By now Abraham had grown sufficiently in his
faith that God could trust him to be
the central figure in this drama.

So this test had two great purposes: one for
Abraham, and one for God.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

As we have already mentioned, this was a
personal test for Abraham.

If he passed this test, his faith would be
fully vindicated by his works.

James 2:21-22 **"Was not Abraham our father
justified by works, when he had offered**

Isaac his son upon the altar?

22: Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?"

And as Abraham's faith was being "**justified by works**," something else was happening.

During those three days of extreme testing, Abraham and Isaac were to *picture* God the Father and God the Son.

Yes, on the stage of Abraham's life, we will see the great drama of Calvary unfolding.

I could almost say that Abraham and Isaac were the main actors, but that would not be entirely correct.

Actually, in this drama, there were no actors.

No, there was no grease paint or artificial tears, or preconceived speeches involved.

If we had been the only audience, regular actors would have been quite sufficient.

But this scene was to be played out before God, and God looks on the heart.

Yes, in this drama, the tears, the anguish, and the deep longings of the heart were all very *real*.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

V 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."**

The name "**Moriah**" is significant, for it means "foreseen of Jehovah."

Adam's sin had not taken God by surprise.

No, God had foreseen man's sin and provided for his redemption long before He created Adam.

In fact, Revelation 13:8 calls Jesus---"**the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.**"

So "**the land of Moriah**" was God's destination, and Abraham was God's man.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

As we know, Abraham was an early riser.

No doubt this busy man had learned long ago the value of an early start.

By rising early, he could attend to priorities before the day crowded in upon him.

In fact, on that fateful morning after Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, we find Abraham up with the birds, beginning his day with God.

Genesis 19:27 **"And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the LORD."**

And Abraham had also learned the danger of procrastination.

When God told him to send Ishmael away, he didn't stop to look at circumstances or ponder the results of his actions, but obeyed the Lord immediately.

Yes, **"Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away."**

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

But what would Abraham do when God told him
to sacrifice Isaac?

Would he procrastinate? would He
rationalize?

Let's find out.

V 3 **"And Abraham rose up early in the
morning, and saddled his ass, and took
two of his young men with him, and
Isaac his son, and clave the wood for
the burnt offering, and rose up, and
went unto the place of which God had
told him."**

The place of sacrifice was not close by.

In fact, it was three days' journey from
Abraham's home.

So one might wonder why he split the wood at
home and carried it all that way.

After all, there was probably lots of wood
in **"the land of Moriah."**

I think this choice was God's rather than Abraham's, for this early preparation tells us much the same story that the word "**Moriah**" does.

"Moriah" means "foreseen of Jehovah," and so speaks of "**the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.**"

In like manner, the early preparation of the wood reminds us that the shadow of the cross was very long indeed.

Yes, ours sins had broken God's heart many centuries before Calvary.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Also, this three days' journey reminds us that the Passover Lamb was kept up for three days to make sure it was without blemish.

For three days Abraham knew what Isaac's fate would be when they reached Mount Mariah.

For three days and two nights Abraham had time to look at his son and think about this whole situation.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

In our imagination, we can picture one of those nights.

As Abraham restlessly turned on his sleeping pallet, he quietly scooped up a handful of sand and let it run slowly through his fingers. **"And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered."**

He gazed up at the night sky and saw the stars twinkling in God's heaven---"**tell the stars, if thou be able to number**

them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be."

Isaac isn't even married yet.

How is God going to keep His promise if Isaac dies before he has children?

And His promises can't come through anyone else.

*God has clearly said "**in Isaac shall thy seed be called.**"*

So Ishmael can never fulfill God's promises, nor can any other son that God might give me in the future.

No, Isaac must have a family.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

So did Abraham come to the conclusion that God didn't really mean what He said? He had done that once in the past, but he was not about to do that again.

No, God said it, so he believed it!

And so Abraham came to the logical
conclusion that God would raise Isaac
from the dead in order to keep His
promise.

And you know what? He was almost right.
He looked up at the stars, gave a great sigh
of relief, and went back to sleep.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Of course the details of this little scene
are only imaginary, but the bottom line
was very real.

Many years later, the Holy Spirit would
record Abraham's thoughts in Hebrews
11:17-19 **"By faith Abraham, when he
was tried, offered up Isaac: and he
that had received the promises offered
up his only begotten son,
18: Of whom it was said, That in Isaac
shall thy seed be called:**

19: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The next morning, Abram felt a lot better. He had gotten a little sleep, and he was convinced that God would bring Isaac back from the dead.

But resurrection included death, and the thought of killing his son filled his heart with anguish.

V 4 **"Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off."**

As Abraham rode along, the mountain he had been dreading finally appeared in the distance.

And every step of that little donkey brought him closer to the place of sacrifice.

God also **"saw the place afar off."**

And, in fact, we keep coming back to this same theme.

First of all, we noted that the place of sacrifice was found in **"the land of Moriah,"** the land that means "foreseen of Jehovah."

Then we noticed that the wood for the offering was prepared three long days before the sacrifice.

And for Abraham, it had been three days of agony, as his aching heart foreshadowed the heart of God.

And now we are told that **"Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off."**

Once again, we are reminded that Jesus was **"the Lamb slain from the foundation of**

the world," but we also reminded that
God saw Calvary **"afar off."**

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

V 5 **"And Abraham said unto his young men,
Abide ye here with the ass; and I and
the lad will go yonder and worship, and
come again to you."**

The young men could go no further, for the
rest of this journey belonged to the
father and the son.

And this terrible journey foreshadowed
another journey that could only be
taken by God the Father and God the
Son.

It was a journey that began in Gethsemane
and ended at the cross.

That night in Gethsemane, Jesus had turned
to Peter, James, and John, and said **"My
soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto**

death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.

39: And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Jesus and his disciples had walked together for over three years, but now they could go no further.

From that point on, the path was *only* for the Father and the Son.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

On that trip up Mount Moriah, Isaac was responsible for the main burden.

V 6 **"And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand,**

and a knife; and they went both of them together."

In V 6, and again in V 8, we read the words

"they went both of them together."

From Gethsemane to Calvary, God the Father never left His Son's side.

When **"they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands,"** God was there.

Yes, God the Father, Who had sent His Only Begotten Son to be Israel's Messiah, was there when **"they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.**

29: And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!

**30: And they spit upon him, and took
the reed, and smote him on the head."**

And God the Father, who could call down fire
from heaven, and had "**rained upon Sodom
and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire,**"
was there when they led Jesus away to
Calvary and nailed Him to that cruel
cross.

Yes--"**they went both of them together."**

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

V 6 "**And Abraham took the wood of the burnt
offering, and laid it upon Isaac his
son; and he took the fire in his hand,
and a knife; and they went both of them
together."**

Probably the two young men had carried the
wood during that three-day journey.

But now **"Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son."**

Yes, it was Abraham himself that laid the wood upon Isaac's shoulders.

And only the Heavenly Father could lay the wood upon Christ.

It was the fuel that would feed the fires of God's judgment.

It was the fuel that would be consumed to ashes as the flames also consumed the sacrifice.

Yes, it was our sins that we had laid up stick by stick that were placed upon the Son of God, **"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree."**

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

That was the Son's burden, but the Father carried a burden also.

**"--and he took the fire in his hand, and a
knife."**

Yes, when the day for judgment finally
arrived, it was the Father Himself who
**"spared not his own Son, but delivered
him up for us all."**

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

For a while, Abraham and Isaac walked on in
silence.

V 7-8 **"And Isaac spake unto Abraham his
father, and said, My father: and he
said, Here am I, my son. And he said,
Behold the fire and the wood: but where
is the lamb for a burnt offering?
8: And Abraham said, My son, God will
provide himself a lamb for a burnt
offering: so they went both of them
together."**

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

**"My son, God will provide himself a lamb for
a burnt offering."**

This was not an evasive answer, but rather
an answer of faith.

At that moment, Abraham could not tell how,
or when, or where God would **"provide
himself a lamb,"** but he knew He would.

---"so they went both of them together,"

Isaac trusting his father, and Abraham
trusting God.

As far as Abraham was concerned, every step
up that mountain was a step of
suffering.

Out of the corner of his eye, now filled
with tears, Abraham stole a glance at
his son, his only son.

Perhaps Isaac was about the same age as
Abraham's other son whom he had last

seen on that dark dismal morning many years ago.

Oh, he knew that in Ishmael's case, he had been wrong all along.

But this was different. Isaac was the son of promise.

Isaac was the long awaited and precious son of his old age.

But God had commanded, and Abraham would obey.

So in agony of heart, but with unfaltering steps, Abraham moved on steadily to the place of sacrifice.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

As Abraham trod that mountain path, his footsteps pictured the very footsteps of God as He also moved steadily toward dark Calvary.

Yes, God would press on with unfaltering steps, for He knew the cross was the only answer.

Jesus had said, **"O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."**

God had pressed on, for no other way was possible. Our sins and God's righteousness required sacrifice.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

V 9 **"And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood."**

However old Isaac was at that time, Abraham was 100 years older.

Isaac was at the peak of his manhood, and
Abraham was an old man.

Then how was Abraham able to bind that
strong young man and lay him on the
altar?

In my mind, there could be only one answer.
Isaac was willing.

And so it was with Christ.

John 10:17-18 **"Therefore doth my Father
love me, because I lay down my life,
that I might take it again.**

**18: No man taketh it from me, but I lay
it down of myself. I have power to lay
it down, and I have power to take it
again. This commandment have I received
of my Father."**

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The trials and the beatings and the long
march up Calvary's hill had been
torture for the Father's heart.

As He saw his Son laid out on the cross, and
the nails driven into his hands and
feet. His heart was full of grief.

But the worst was yet to come.

For the first time in eternity, they would
no longer go "**both of them together.**"

Yes, the time had finally come when they
must part.

God must forsake His Son and pour out His
righteous judgment upon sin.

That terrible time had finally arrived when
the Father would make "**--- him to be
sin for us, who knew no sin; that we
might be made the righteousness of God
in him.**"

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

And it was a time that not even Abraham
could foreshadow.

V 10-13 "And Abraham stretched forth his
hand, and took the knife to slay his
son.

11: And the angel of the LORD called
unto him out of heaven, and said,
Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am
I.

12: And he said, Lay not thine hand
upon the lad, neither do thou any thing
unto him: for now I know that thou
fearest God, seeing thou hast not
withheld thy son, thine only son from
me.

13: And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and
looked, and behold behind him a ram
caught in a thicket by his horns: and
Abraham went and took the ram, and

offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son."

Yes, God spared Abraham's heart an agony that He could not spare His own.

As Abraham reached for the knife, God said

"Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God."

I believe the Lord knew all along that Abraham feared God.

So why did Abraham have to go through that awful trial?

Why did he have to *pick up* that knife before God could say **"for now I know that thou fearest God"**?

The answer is found in the book of James.

James 2:17 says, **"Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."**

Yes, God looks for reality, and honours it.

And by the way, so do our neighbours.

Although the inspired writings of Paul give us the inward principle of faith, it is the book of James that gives us the outward development of that principle.

Yes, faith without works is just theory.

Back in Genesis 15:6, we were told that Abraham was justified when he believed in the LORD.

Remember that. **"And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness."**

But as soon as Abraham picked up that knife, his faith was embodied in works.

James 2:21 **"Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?"**

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

V 14 **"And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen."**

Abraham's victory, in the face of trial, had led him to a deeper appreciation of God.

If Abraham had never lifted that knife to slay his son, he would have never known God as "**Jehovah-jireh**," *the Lord will provide*.

Yes, without trials, it is all theory.

If we only study for a test but never write it, we will never receive His "**Well done**."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

V 15-18 **"And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,**

16: And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:

17: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

18: And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."

As far as we know, this was the last time that God spoke directly to Abraham, so He summed up the Abrahamic Covenant in all its fullness.

And, as you will notice, God's very last words to Abraham were **"because thou hast obeyed my voice."**

What Abraham had already received by faith, he had now confirmed by the outworkings of his faith.

James 2:21-24 **"Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?**

22: Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

23: And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

24: Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Genesis 22:19 **"So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beer-sheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beer-sheba."**

On the way back home, Abraham had very different thoughts about God and about his son Isaac.

In fact, he had very different thoughts about many things.

Abraham was now living on a higher plain, and he could have never climbed so high without that trial.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

V 20 **"And it came to pass after these things, that it was told Abraham, saying, Behold, Milcah, she hath also born children unto thy brother Nahor."**

And I'm going to skip all those difficult names ahead, and just read V 23: **"And Bethuel begat Rebekah: these eight Milcah did bear to Nahor, Abraham's brother."**

Probably Abraham had lost contact with his brother when he had left home for Canaan many years ago.

But then someone, perhaps a member of a passing caravan, brought him news of his brother.

This information was timely, and I believe God-directed.

Abraham didn't know it yet, but very soon the Holy Spirit would lead his eldest servant to Rebekah's door.

How fitting then that the news of Rebekah's family should arrive at this particular time.

Once again, Isaac would become a type of
Christ.

Having symbolically gone through death and
resurrection, he would soon receive his
bride!