

Genesis 22

Given at Beth Messiah
Sydney
28 September 2002
By Bob Mendelsohn

" The Binding of Isaac "

[For those online, there is the text of Scripture at the end also more links/ resources]

Introduction

Christians are always talking about the crucifixion. One of the things I wince at most in the media is a celebration say in South America where some crucifix-waving Catholics are celebrating the death or anniversary of the elevation of one of their own into martyrdom. Accolades are sung and saints are venerated in their culture. Jews don't do that. But this fascination with the cross of Jesus and the symbol that has for many Jewish people been one of terror in the Crusades and the Inquisition and pogroms in Russia... what is it about the cross that is so captivating, so venerable?

Also have you ever wondered what the Bible means when it says, "it pleased the Lord to bruise Jesus?" (Isaiah 53) What kind of blood-thirsty wicked God is satisfied and has pleasure in the death of His only son?

. Let's read Gen 22. (from the Torah and then the Bible) and see what it has to say to us as 21st Century people and use its message to instruct us as we continue learning from this historic and classic first book of the Bible. And today we will also read Hebrews chapter 11.8-12, 17-19.

The promise was given

Those of you who have been with us at all in the last 5 months know we've been studying Genesis. A few weeks back, God told the old man Abraham that he would have a child. And He said that child would be the heir to Abraham's riches and His blessing. God's covenant of grace and favor would be on Abraham, that's been said. Now the covenant would be transferred to his son.

Three contenders for the sonship contest arose. It was like an episode of reality TV like Survivor or Big Brother. First Lot (chap 13-19) came along, but he wasn't the one. He was voted off. Then came Ishmael (chap 17). Nope, tribal council spoke, he wouldn't do. Even the servant Eliezer (chap 15) wanted his turn.

So last week we saw that the favored son is named Isaac. And Isaac was to grow in the character and nature of Abraham and thus be a faithful person. He would be a responsive to God person (that's how we defined 'faith': Taking God at His word.) Isaac was to be the fulfillment of God's promises and thus bear God to the next generation. Can you imagine having the satisfaction of the promise, made some 38 years before, now standing in front of you in your wife's arms.

Then Isaac grew. Promises no doubt were remembered often, perhaps at anniversaries or holidays. God told us it would happen; God fulfilled His plan. Praise Him name!

The promise is tested

Now add to that a few years, say 30 years. You have taught your son the ways of God. You have watched him grow and become a man. Then the story today happens. God tests you. He wants you to travel a few days into the wilderness and slay your son. He wants you to ruin the very thing He made. He is taking the mickey out of you, you think. He is having the consummate go at you. What else is running through your mind? Maybe you misheard Him? Maybe you are going meshuggeh?

In every gift there is a test. Will you love the gift more than the giver? In every moment of relationship with God, He wants you and He both to know that He is the substance of the relationship. Thus the test. Not a test to hope you fail. Some of you had teachers in school or at uni you were sure had this as the purpose of their examinations. But a real teacher gives you tests to examine you, to determine, to show forth what you are really made of and what you actually know. This demonstration of Abraham's faith was intentional by God. And it is usual for our relationship with God as well.

Matthew Henry says, "every word here [to Abraham] is a sword in his bones." Listen to what God says, "take your son", Hear Abraham saying, "I have two!" "Your only son", Abraham replies I have two only sons- one from Sarah and one from Hagar!. "Whom you love" I love them both. "Isaac" No more answers from Abraham.

Then God tells Abraham to take this son, this special son, this promise fulfilling son and slay him. Now here's the issue of the nutty God asking the gut wrenching human sacrifice to be done to the Son of Promise. What! You are right in shouting. You are aching along with every reader of this book. You are asking the right question of the God who sometimes loves to explain.

Togetherness

Listen to the response, "v'hailchu sh'nehem yachdav" And the two of them walked on together. 341 times in the NASB we have the word "together". Waters were gathered t. Fig leaves were sown t. Jacob and Esau will struggle t. Moses' elders gathered t. Come now let us reason t. Let us exalt His name t. You get the idea.

A few years ago the Orthodox Jewish leaders in Israel said, basically, "If you don't hear the sound of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah blown in an Orthodox shule, you haven't heard the shofar at all." They were deriding the liberal Jews and you can only imagine what they would have thought about us here at Beth Messiah!

The togetherness, the yachdavness of our being is a vital command. We need to go to Ingatherings together. We need to have meetings together here on Shabbat morning. We need to see and ring each other during the week. We need to work together handing out shopping bags and visiting orphans and widows. We need to love one another together. Get it? Let's keep pondering how to do this. In two weeks, on the 12th of October, we will stay behind after services and have our monthly fellowship meal together. It goes well beyond that, but certainly includes that. So plan to visit us and bring a dish to share and let's eat and fellowship together.

Back to our story. The Bible says it twice, they walked on together. v'hailchu sh'nehem yachdav. What did they know was ahead? Isaac thought they were off to sacrifice as was their custom. Abraham knows something different. The Hebrew has a little prefix in verse 5. We will go, we will worship, we will return. What, you ask. What was Abraham thinking? He was told to slay his son. Who would then return? He actually knew they both would return.

Types

The book of Hebrews give us the midrash from NT writers on the subject. Here we read, "He considered that God is able to raise men even from the dead; from which he also received him back as a type." If you know much about what I believe in the Scriptures you know I get nervous with this 'type' business. I don't like it when people say the colors of the temple are symbolic of something particular. Or that the number of people was this many, which clearly means the Seventh Day is to be satisfied in the 14th Century, etc. People who are into numerology and types and antitypes can make the Bible say anything they want it to say. It's called 'isogetic' interpretation and that's a lousy way to read a book, especially the Book of Books.

However, the Bible itself can identify a type and clarify it for us. Thus, here in Hebrews, we read that the offering of Isaac was symbolic or representative of something else, something better. It says that Abraham believed God and trusted that if God wanted Isaac dead, that God would resurrect Isaac after Abraham slew him. For Abraham took God at His word.

The pleasure of fulfilled and renewed promises

Here's the problem. We see it in two sometimes-conflicting pleasures of God. One is the love of God and the pleasure of His own glory. The other is the love He has for you and me, consummate sinners and His desire to be pleased in relationship with us. How can He mesh these two contrary pleasures?

Isaiah 53 says it all.

Verse 6 " All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him."

Verse 8 " Who considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living,
For the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due?"

Verse 10 " But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief;
If He would render Himself as a guilt offering,"

Verse 11 " He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the
good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish
of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One,
My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities."

There you have it. The death of Y'shua, not a kindly old grandfatherly
"she'll be right mate" method of dealing with sin. This wasn't a swooning hero
who didn't really die. He was cut off out of the land of the living. He took our
sins, and yet He rose again. He will see his offspring, who are not physical seed,
but those who are the justified ones, for whom He bore their iniquities.

Y'shua the Great Type

So with the book of Hebrews as authenticator of our conclusion here, let's
rehearse the story in terms of Jesus. He was the only begotten Son of God, the
one whom God the Father loved. He was the unique fulfillment of the promises
of God and the one on whom the Father put all His hopes for mankind.

They walked on together, in Y'shua's case, He well knew the intention of
the death on Calvary. And He agreed with the Father's plan for humanity. As the
Father asked Isaac to carry the wood for the sacrifice, so Y'shua carried the cross
to the top of the hill in Jerusalem.

He willingly allowed himself to be bound to the Roman cross. There He
died. As the ram was caught in the thicket, so He had a crown of thorns around
His head. Isaac was told, "God will provide Himself the lamb for the burnt
offering." And thus Y'shua as the consummate Lamb of God died for our sins.
From there He went to the grave.

After three days, Abraham said he would return. On the third day Y'shua rose from the dead and ever lives for us!

Summary

Play Michael Card song... Sacrifice....

Sunday night I was on radio with John Cleary on the ABC for an hour. It was lively to be sure. Thanks to David and Toni who rang in and asked questions. Thanks to those others of you who were waiting in the queue who did not get on the show. The dean of St Mary's Cathedral, Monsignor Tony, was the other guest and we were discussing the relevance and purposes of forthright evangelism of the Jewish people by the Catholic church. Even though I'm not anything close to a Catholic, the recent document signed by the Catholic bishops in America was the prime driver of the show. In that document the bishops said that Jews had a "saving relationship with God without Jesus" and thus did not require preaching. They did not need the evangelistic mandate previously thought and executed (my intentional word) by the Catholics of history.

One of the images I chose to use in answer to this heretical view of the neo-pagan Catholics who drape their heresy in multicultural pluralistic religious garbage was the cross. "If there were any other way for God to redeem mankind, why would He have allowed His only Son to die on the cross?" If there were another way and God the Father still send His Son Y'shua to the death, the horrible death of crucifixion, then the Father does not love the Son at all, but chose to mock him." In other words, it was a total waste!

How dare the Monsignor Tony allow himself to believe this. How dare he proliferate the folly of non-evangelism! How ridiculous and wicked to imagine God treating His Son in this way. I'm not talking about any particular individual Catholic, but about this doctrine of universalism that says all people will eventually find God and thus evangelism is out of pluralistic bounds. The cross is God's love gift to humanity. It's the Father's pleasure to bruise the Son and thus to redeem all of us!

Now here's another rub. I'm not talking about the veneration of the cross. It's not about walking in the streets waving the picture of the Son of Man on the cross and bowing to it in some idolatrous method. I'm talking about the Savior who died on it and who bought us with His blood.

Philip Bliss wrote it a bit earlier in his hymn, "Man of Sorrows"

"Man of sorrows" What a name for the Son of God who came. Ruined sinners to reclaim. Hallelujah! What a saviour!

Bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemn'd He stood. Sealed my pardon with His blood. Hallelujah!

Guilty, vile and helpless we, spotless Lamb of God was He; Full atonement! Can it be? Hallelujah. Lifted up was He to die. "It is finished" was His cry. Now in heaven exalted high. Hallelujah! When He comes our glorious King, all His ransomed home to bring, then anew this song we'll sing, "Hallelujah! What a saviour!"

Here are some things I see as we conclude today, and you can add your thoughts to your own list.

- 1) God will always test us especially after He has given us a gift
- 2) God wants us to believe his promises and be willing to sacrifice them
- 3) Some OT passages are very much designed for allegory and types and you can be sure of those if they are found recorded in the NT.
- 4) God is pleased in the death of His Son

Dear friends, we have eternal life due to the Saviour Y'shua, due to His love and forgiveness. His Resurrection has proven His new covenant. His teaching is great, and yet it goes well beyond that to His life and death. No amount of good works will give us enough information to help us overcome evil. No amount of information will help us overcome our own evil inclination. Only the messiah can repair our relationship with God, which will in turn give us pleasure with Him.

If you have never experienced this eternal and new life about which we are speaking, if you are yet outside the relationship with God, then pray with me. If you haven't yet been