

The Double Call of God (1)

‘Abraham, Abraham’

Gen 22 v 11 “And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham”

Reading: Gen 22 v 1 – 19 and Heb 11 v 17 – 19 ‘The Testing and Blessing of Abraham’

The story of Abraham and Isaac, a father and a son and a place of sacrifice. A picture of another Father and Son, God and the Lord Jesus, and another place of sacrifice, Golgotha.

- v 1,2 - The Test ‘Take now thy son..’
- v 3 - The Response ‘And Abraham rose up early..’
- v 4 – 14 - The Place ‘..saw the place afar off.’
- v 15 – 19 - The Blessing ‘I will bless thee..’

v 1,2 The Test

At the beginning of Gen 22 we read that the test came “*after these things*”. From chap 21 we learn that the test came when things were going well for Abraham. In v 33 Abraham was enjoying communion with God and at v 22 others recognised “*God is with thee in all that thou doest*”. The lesson to note is that a test can come from God at any time; godly living does not exempt us from facing trials. However, we should remember that tests from God are always for a reason, James 1 v 12 “*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life.*”

In v 1 “*God did tempt Abraham*”. The word translated ‘tempt’ means to test or prove. As we’ve already noted tests from God are for a purpose, although not always understood at the time. In the case of Abraham the test came to prove that Abraham feared God (see v 12). The test as described in v 2 was severe for Abraham 1) ‘*Take now thy son*’, 2) ‘*thine only son Isaac*’ and 3) ‘*whom thou lovest*’. The poet has said ‘The price is high, severe the test for those who would enjoy God’s best’. The test of Abraham was a picture of what God would do John 3 v 16 “*For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son*”.

v 3 The Response

How would Abraham respond to this test? Isaac was the one in whom all his hopes rested Heb 11 v 18 “*Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called*”. Abraham did not put it off, he did not argue with God; he responded with faith (Heb 11) and with unquestioning obedience. In v3 we find Abraham early in the morning preparing to obey God and by the end of the verse “*he rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.*” This should be our response to God, faith and obedience. Faith, as the Lord Jesus taught Jairus in Mark 5 v 36 “*Be not afraid, only believe.*” and obedience as Samuel taught Saul in 1 Sam 15 v 22 “*Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.*”

v 4 – 14 The Place

In these verses we come to ‘**The Place**’, v 4 “*saw the place afar off*”, and the place is interesting. It reminds us of John 19 v 17 “*And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew, Golgotha*”. It was a place appointed by God (see v 2); it was a mountain in Moriah. In 2 Chron 3 we read again of Mount Moriah “*Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem in Mount Moriah.*” Nineteen hundred years later, on the same mountain, perhaps the same spot, the Son of God offered himself.

At v 6 read of **'The Walk'**, the journey Abraham and Isaac made to the place of sacrifice. Abraham had great faith, he says to the young men v5 *"I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you."* The Hebrew writer tells us that Abraham believed that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead. And so *"they went both of them together"* to the place of sacrifice. A picture of another Father and Son who walked in perfect communion toward the place of sacrifice, until in John 12 v 27 the place is reached *"for this cause came I unto this hour"*. As Isaac carried the wood, so we read of the Lord Jesus *"and he bearing his cross went forth"*.

As they walked, they talked v 7 and 8 **'The Talk'**. They talked of a lamb for a burnt offering and Abraham said, *"My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering"*. Prophetic words, looking forward to the day almost 2 000 years later when God provided Himselfa lamb for a burnt offering. The Baptist could witness of the Lord Jesus *"Behold the Lamb of God, which beareth away the sin of the world"* and the apostle writes to the Galatians *"who gave himself for our sins."*

When they came to the place in v 9 and 10 they built **'The Altar'**. As before there is no hesitation from Abraham, unquestioning obedience, he builds an altar. Willingly Isaac is bound and laid on the altar and Abraham *"took the knife to slay his son."* Again our thoughts travel down the centuries to another scene of sacrifice on Mount Moriah; not an altar of stone, but a cross of wood. A cross of wood uplifted and one upon it suspended between heaven and earth. The poet has written 'Why did they nail him to Calvary's tree? Why tell me why was he there? Jesus the healer, the helper, the friend, Why tell me why was he there?' The New Testament writers give us the answer e.g. Gal 2 v 20 *"..the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."*

As the knife is raised to kill in v 11 and 12 we have **'The Call'**. From heaven God calls, and He calls with a double call *"Abraham, Abraham"* and as in v 1 Abraham replies *"Here am I"*. Abraham is still sensitive to the voice of God, even in the midst of such a great trial. The message from heaven is to declare that the test has been passed, *"now I know that thou fearest God"*. The test was severe, but the faithfulness of the servant had been proved. The obedience of the servant proved his faithfulness. In Mark 2 v 11 God again speaks from heaven *"Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."* Abraham proved his faithfulness in that he did not withhold his only son. In the New Testament we find that God proved his love for us 1 John 4 v 9 *"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world."*

In v 13 we read of **'The Substitute'**, *"a ram caught in a thicket by his horns"*. The ram took Isaac's place and was offered on the altar, a burnt offering unto the Lord. When the Lamb of God came to the place called Calvary there was no substitute found. The hymnwriter said 'There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin, He only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in.'

Finally in this section, in v 14 we read of **'The Name'**, the name of the place. The place of sacrifice was called Jehovah jireh, which means 'The Lord will see, or the Lord will provide'. How apt for the place where 1 900 years later God was to provide Himself, the Lamb. It was a place that was to be remembered, recognised as a special place, honoured by a tradition that said *"In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen / provided"*. Today we remember the place of sacrifice and more particularly the Lamb of God, the sacrifice.

v 15 – 19 The Blessing

"And the angel of the Lord calls unto Abraham out of heaven for the second time." This time it was a call of blessing, *"because thou hast done this thing.....I will bless thee"*. Obedience to God will bring blessing from God.