

Abraham - Part Ten

by Charles E. Wigg

Cast out the bondwoman and her son:

The day of Isaac's weaning was a day of great rejoicing. Abraham had been careful to obey the word of God, circumcising Isaac on the eighth day. Such is the obedience we have come to expect of this prince of God. But the joy of the feast that accompanied the weaning of Isaac was marred by one thing; Sarah saw Ishmael mocking; the flesh cannot bear to be replaced, it must always have the first place. The two could not co-exist together, that which is born of the flesh must be cast out. Abraham was loath to cast out the bondwoman and her son; but God told him not to grieve; there was no other way.

We too have to come to this crisis, the flesh, however attractive it may be, must be judged. I have to learn to accept God's judgment of what I was. I have to say with Paul; "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me:

When Abraham cast out Ishmael, it was a part of himself, that he had to give up. It cost him very dearly.

God's blessing awakens envy:

Next we find that the Philistine king noticed the obvious blessing of God in Abraham's life. It made him afraid. He approached Abraham and proposed that they make a covenant. This is characteristic of carnality, it recognizes, but resents the blessing of God in the lives of others, and wishes to make its own position secure. However the King had no reason to doubt the motives or actions of this prince of God; Abraham readily agreed to the proposal.

After that matter was settled, Abraham had cause to rebuke Abimelech, over the conduct of **his servants**. They were the ones who could not be trusted; they violently took away a resource that Abraham had gained through hard work. However he administered the rebuke very graciously. He then set aside seven ewe lambs, (a picture of the "Meekness and gentleness of Christ"). He then gave them to Abimelech as a testimony that he had dug the well, which he then named "Beersheba", (the well of the oath) Abraham then planted a grove at that place. These young trees were to remind him afresh each day of the faithfulness of God.

The Bliss of God's fulfilled promise:

There then followed 20 years of the sweetest bliss. Abraham sojourned on what the Philistines claimed was their land, many days. These were years of unclouded joy. He saw the son of promise grow up through the years of childhood, and adolescence, until he reached young manhood.

These were blessed, peaceful years. Their manner of living, as pilgrims, meant that they were never motivated by greed. Abraham never built a house, but they lived together in tents, a close, happy, informal relationship. The pilgrim's life is a very blessed one. He did not get involved in business, battles, or Politics, but just lived each day in the enjoyment of God's blessing. This is the kind of life that God wishes you and I to enjoy. We are strangers and pilgrims. Our home is not here; our commonwealth has its existence in the heavens. We are citizens of another country. It is from there that we await our Lord Jesus as Savior, (Phil.3: 20 – 21.)

While wait for Him to come, ours is to be a life that is free of anxious care. We have a loving heavenly Father; one who has promised to supply our every need from day to day.

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The great shock:

All of this idyllic life was suddenly shattered, by God asking Abraham to offer that wonderful son of his, the one he loved so dearly, as a sacrifice on one of the mountains that God would show him.

It says that, "God would test Abraham". We might ask why? Did not God know how Abraham would respond? Of course He did! Then why test him, subject him to this harrowing experience? God did this for your sake, and for mine. If God had never put Abraham to this test, then we would never have known how he would react. His example has been such a challenge, and a comfort to so many down through the centuries of God's dealings with men. God was perfectly within His divine rights: He had given Isaac, was it unjust that He should ask him back again? In a similar situation Job said, "the Lord gave; the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!"

Unquestioning obedience:

Though his heart was broken, yet Abraham did not question, he meekly obeyed. Neither did he put the matter off, but it seems that the following morning, he made preparations for the journey. Some believe that he did not tell Sarah what he had been commanded to do; but I can hardly believe this. I believe that she shared the great sorrow, she too took part in the sacrifice. How devastating it must have been to her; to part with the dearest object of her affections. To part with the son for whom she had waited so long. They could not have possibly understood what God had in mind in all this.

As is so often the case in life's tragedies, God does not explain what He is doing, He expects us to accept all from His hand. It is often long afterwards, that He may reveal to us the purpose that He had in His heart. In fact it may not be until we reach the glory, that we will understand, but at last we will. When we do, we will never cease to praise and adore Him, for His marvelous grace; for the wonder of His glorious design.

Sad surrender:

It must have been so hard for Abraham to conceal the sorrow of his broken heart; yet with a strength and a grace given of God, he bore up like a man, and began that sad journey. Sarah too must have hidden away, must have buried her weeping face in the pillow, as we sometimes do. As Isaac left, there went a part of her life, one of her reasons for living. Would she ever see him again? Yet they both gave up to God, the dearest object of their affections. Solemn, but blessed surrender! Are you and I willing for such a surrender?

The sorrowful journey:

As they journeyed along, the country was so well known to Abraham, for perhaps 45 years he had lived in these places. Perhaps he explained to Isaac the many experiences that he had passed through in those places. It was on the third day; (the day of resurrection), that Abraham lifted up his eyes, he saw the fatal place from afar. There came a point where they could take the servants and the ass, no further. What was to follow was to be known only to them, and to God. It would have been so; if God had not chosen to reveal it to us in His word; we are meant to be reverent spectators.

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They went both of them together, so we are told, how sweet were those last moments of communion between the father and the son! Isaac was a strong young man. Strong enough to carry sufficient wood to consume his own body, on his back, up that mountain. Yet there was something that he could not understand. "My Father, (he asks), here is the fire, and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Now Abraham's faith shines through, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering!" These were words that could only be spoken in faith.

The altar is built:

We are told that when they came to the spot, Abraham built an altar. He was now an old man of more than a hundred and twenty years; Isaac is a strong young man in his early twenties, who do you suppose gathered the large stones for the construction of the altar? It is reasonable to suppose that Isaac did. What a picture this is of his total surrender. The wood is then placed on the altar, but still no sacrifice appeared. It was then that the terrible truth was revealed Isaac was to be the sacrifice.

Isaac's surrender:

We do not often realize the part that Isaac had in all this. He was a strong young man; his father was a very old man. He did not have to physically resist his father; all he had to do was to run away, that he could do easily; but instead he meekly yielded himself to the will of God. He allowed his father to bind him; possibly with the rope that bound the wood together. He may even have assisted his father in placing himself on the wood, upon the altar. His surrender was complete:

The fatal moment:

Doubtless with a trembling hand, and a breaking heart, Abraham raised the knife. Isaac lay there, expecting to feel at any moment the pain of that sharp knife piercing his chest, then his heart. But just at that moment an urgent voice is heard from heaven; "Abraham, Abraham, do not harm the lad". He turns to see who is speaking; and there he sees a ram, caught by its horns in a thicket; the **LAMB** of God's provision. The knife that should have ended Isaac's life, was then used to set him free; to cut the bonds that bound him. The substitute they then offered instead of Isaac.

What a beautiful picture it all presents; a picture of the surrender of self, that marks the culmination of sanctification. "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. (Rom. 12: 1.)

A type of the Father and the Son:

This chapter, (22), gives us also a beautiful typical picture of the relationships between our Heavenly Father, and the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and what was involved for both, when the Father, in wondrous love, gave His Son, to die for us at the place, Golgotha. We will never know just what it cost the Father to give His only begotten Son, for us. Nor will we ever be able to understand what it cost the Lord Jesus, to give himself, for us.

It is John, in his gospel; who brings out the intimate relationship that existed between the Father and the Son, (see John 1: 14, Ch. 3:16, Ch. 17:5 & 24. Rom. 8: 32. Col. 1: 13.) All these scriptures, and many

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others; emphasize the sweetness of that love-relationship that existed between the Father and the Son, Yet at Calvary, it was all broken.

Twice it is said of Abraham and Isaac, that they; "went both of them together". A typical picture of the sweetness of the communion that existed between the Father and the Son, as He trod the path to the cross. We are also reminded that not only did the Father give the Son, for us; but also the Lord Jesus gave himself for us; for me. (Gal. 2: 20, Eph. 5: 25.)

In the garden, where He poured out his soul, with strong crying and tears; we hear Him say, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine be done". The type failed, (it always does, it never can adequately represent the fullness), because a substitute was provided. A ram, (Heb. Strong one), was caught by its horns in a thicket. The horns represent its strength, the thicket, the will of God. In Psalm 89: 19, God says, "I have laid help on one that is mighty." The mighty personal power of the Lord Jesus was surrendered to the greater power of the will of God, in Gethsemane.

It is interesting to note, that it is in this chapter, we are told about Rebecca. This links with the scripture already quoted in Eph. 5: 25. Also we never read of Isaac coming down from the mountain; and we are told that Abraham received him from the dead in figure, (Heb. 11: 19.) As a reward for His atoning sufferings, our Lord Jesus has received the Church; His Bride. When next we read of him, he is meditating in the field, and it is there that his bride is brought to him.