

## Week 2 Synopsis

In Genesis 22, why did Abraham obey God's command? (*focus for Genesis Group*)

- I think that there could have been several reasons why Abraham obeyed God's command. The first could have been fear. ... It could have been greed. ... What does that leave but faith and trust.
- First it could be that God was testing Abraham to see if he would, on moral grounds, refuse to commit murder--even when commanded by God to do it. The second thing is that Abraham went along with it because he had faith----- that, in the end, God would not require him to kill his son. And if it came right down to it--was prepared to resist the command and not kill his son if he had to. God doesn't need or want human sacrifice because it is a violation of his moral law. So in effect it was a test, but not in the way we think.

“The Genesis text remains an important paradigm regarding the way in which to integrate theological and scientific knowledge in a common search for truth about the world.” (*TIOT*, p37)

If someone asks you if you believe in scientific views about the origin of the universe or in creationism, how do you respond? (*focus for Exodus Group*)

- Well, with all the talk in class about having an open mind and not being too legalistic about interpretation, I'm pleased to say that my answer to this question is that I am a fence sitter! ... One person once said to me that maybe the Genesis creation story was a "parable" because God didn't think we could handle the gritty details of an evolution story. So, while I really believe in creationism, I think perhaps the two veins of thought could co-exist. I'm at least open to the possibility.
- To my mind, when we talk about scientific theory vs. creation, we are trying to compare apples and oranges. They are not mutually exclusive. The Bible is not meant to be a scientific textbook, it is primarily meant to describe the "why" rather than the "how" of creation.
- I agree with you Ron on how modern science might conflict with a literal reading of Genesis. I wonder though if one day science will discover this underlying code to life or something and its acronym would be similar to the Hebrew word, "good". As if the answer was there all along, "And it was good", but it just took thousands of years to figure it out. That argument isn't very scientific or theological, but man, would it be cool.
- Genesis is simply not intended to be a scientific report. Rather a confession of faith.
- After admitting that I simply cannot venture to understand how God really works, as no one can, I'd have to say that somehow they both fall into play because science has merit and God most certainly is the creator. ... At this point I would encourage their questioning, for it is only through questions that we come to any sort of truth. If they continue over days/months/years to ask questions with an open heart/mind, they will assuredly discover that God is the Creator and that they still can't explain creation definitively. Then we shall smile at our mutual non-understanding and praise God for giving us such inquisitive minds.

Read the concluding paragraph of chapter 2 of *TIOT* on p65. What do you find to be the most remarkable statement made there? (*focus for Leviticus Group*)

- "The world continues to live and breathe, and to establish families and nations, because God makes a gracious, unconditional commitment to stay with the world, come what may in the wake of human sinfulness." ... This sentence is a reminder of God's gracious love for us.
- This speaks to the depth of God's love for humankind. ... Despite what He knows about the mind of humankind, God still acts and is active in providing the answer to our "sin predicament".
- I found this to be the most important sentence in the paragraph because it is what we still live by today.
- God is willing to take suffering on himself to preserve and save his people and his relationship with them, a relationship I see as one of integrity rather than blind servitude. I... So on the "far side of the flood" God decides to set events in motion which eventually lead to the coming of Christ.
- In regards to the "messianic plan": Why did God wait thousands of years for the fruition of this plan? Was humanity any more ready for it when it happened than before?
- The realization that "God makes a gracious, unconditional commitment to stay with the world, come what may in the wake of human sinfulness" is remarkable to me, inspiring a strong reaction of immense gratitude.
- How else can God tell us to cherish life, and its unfathomable generations, except by stories about how the seeds of nations, the seeds of life itself as we understand it, can be threatened by various things: ourselves, the creation around us, and even our Creator... Lest we think we understand this, let us recall that in this story the symbol of power and stubborn tenacity gets caught in a thicket enroute to its demise.

In Genesis 22, how could God ask such a thing of Abraham, even if it was only a "test"? (*focus for Numbers Group*)

- ... Thus, even if what God is only doing a "test", it seems to be a cruel test, and hence unethical. How can we explain this?
- [Abraham] chooses to believe in a God that is even greater than His promises. ... Believing in a God who is even greater than his promises may be both the scariest and the most reassuring activity on this earth. For if God is even greater than his promises, then nothing in this life is predictable. But if you believe in such a God, you will also be able to trust him no matter what happens. ... (Acknowledgment: The proposal that we have a God "who is even greater than his promises" occurs on page 128 of the book "Yearning" by Craig Barnes.)
- God knows Abraham's heart, but wants the whole world to know also.
- Perhaps God's test of Abraham was two-fold. In one sense God was testing Abraham to see if Abraham was willing to do whatever God asked of him. In another way, God may have been testing young Isaac, to see if Isaac trusted God enough to give up even his young life. I would think that Isaac had an opportunity to run away at some point during the testing. Also, after their return, God may have wanted to see if Isaac would trust his father (Abraham) after what he had been through.

How does 50.15-21 serve as a fitting conclusion to the book of Genesis? (*focus for Deuteronomy Group*)

- ... the response is "it is good" because if it weren't for the mistakes the redemption and eventual good would not have been possible.
- The account in Genesis 50:15-21 speaks of family reconciliation. It provides a "bookend" to the creation story.
- Joseph's actions shown *HU* mankind's possibility to relate with God and forgive. What a wonderful concept.
- His vision as a child came true as they offered to be his slaves, *but Joseph doesn't play God.*
- Joseph mirrors God in showing mercy even when others keep messing up.

In Genesis 22, what is Isaac's role in the drama? (BTW, how old was Isaac when this happened?) (*focus for Joshua Group*)

- If I were asked this question as a teenager, after reading this story, I would have answered that Isaac's role was very concrete and of little significance – he is the sacrifice; he is no different from the role a goat or a calf would play in a ritual sacrifice (which, in my opinion, was a terrible thing for God to ask of Abraham). I thought this way because Isaac really does not have that big of a role in the narrative. In fact, the majority of interactions at play in this narrative are between Abraham and God (or an angel of God). However, after examining the story over the years, I realized that Isaac's role is very significant. He is the central part of the narrative; he is the link between God and Abraham at that time. Isaac is the instrument God uses to test Abraham's devotion.
  - I don't know if you realized it, but your posting had a bit of a typo. Regarding Isaac's questioning of Abraham, you quoted Isaac as saying, "God will provide for himself..." God will provide for himself. The text actually reads, "God himself will provide..." but your transposition is much more thought-provoking. Read according to your formulation, Abraham would be in effect saying, "Son, I have no idea how God will fulfill his promise to make me a father of nations if He has me kill you, but I'm sure He'll think of something." And I think that that is how we should look at the story. This goes along with the ending of our OT class on Tuesday, where we discussed the fact that the problem of death can be, perhaps should be, looked at as God's problem, not humanity's. God will, and can always be counted on to, find a way out of God's problems.
- I don't know that God was testing Abraham's devotion for His own(God's)needs as much as he was asking Abraham to test his own faith for himself...kind of a "growth" experience for Abraham through Isaac.
- Isaac's roll in Genesis 22 is to be the ultimate sacrifice for Abraham to make. Isaac embodies everything God has promised to Abraham. ...Life is given to Isaac a second time (first being his natural birth) when God provides a ram for sacrifice.
- Both Abraham and Isaac exercised great faith in this account as one (Abraham) began to prepare the sacrifice and the other (Isaac) trusted God and his father enough to allow it to happen.
- My sense tonight is that we have a story with not just of message of a sacrificial lamb that God provides both now and at the cross but... in keeping with what we are doing this

semester by living the stories of the OT so that we better understand our stories and our oneness with the ancients I am rooted tonight with the question...What would I give up to the God of the Cosmos that is like "life inside my bones?"

- Is it total fear of his father or of God? Isaac by this time I'm sure knows his father well enough to know that he follows and worships God and his many words. From the scripture it is not abnormal for him to be making a sacrifice. So...maybe Isaac thinks this is God's will. It makes him a man no matter his age to lay down and become a living sacrifice to the Lord!
- Isaac plays at least two roles in Gen. 22. Just as Genesis as a whole has several layers of meaning, so does the story of the Akedah. On a purely literary level, Isaac is indeed an innocent sacrificial victim. At a deeper level, however, he is a symbol. Isaac is symbolic of humankind's most deeply-seated desires and/or values. Textually speaking, God is calling on Abraham to sacrifice his son. Symbolically speaking, God is telling readers of the account that they too must be prepared to sacrifice, to put aside, all that they consider life priorities; this is what it means to be faithful to me, says the LORD.