

Old Testament Heroes: Abraham's Willingness to Sacrifice Isaac; He becomes a Friend of God; Joseph's Bones; Conclusion: Paul Confirms the Resurrection

Genesis 22:1 - Now it came about after these things, that God tested [נָסָה *nasah*] Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

v. 2 - And He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you."

Typology is replete in these mandates. Isaac becomes a type of Christ while Abraham illustrates God the Father. Abraham's only son portrays the Messiah as the uniquely-born Son of God and Abraham's love for Isaac speaks of the Father's personal love for Jesus.

God the Father, although He loved His Son in an immeasurable way, was willing to offer him as a sacrifice for the entire human race. Abraham loved Isaac in the way any Father would love his son. That he was being asked to offer Isaac as a sacrifice posed the maximum test for Abraham's faith in the reality of God's eternal city.

We are also told that the place of sacrifice is the "land of Moriah": מוֹרְיָה *Moriyyah*. This word is a compound made up of three elements: (1) the prefix *mem*: "the place"; (2) the root *ra'ah*: "to see"; and (3) the name of deity: *Yahweh*. It literally means "the place where Jehovah provides." This location was the future site of the temple of Solomon and is presently occupied by the Islam's Dome of the Rock.

The explanation given for why God would command Abraham to do such a thing is that He was testing him. The Hebrew word for "testing" is נָסָה *nasah* which carries the idea of testing or "proving the quality of someone or something." Often it is God who is responsible for bringing testing upon man and this is frequently administered through adversity or hardship. This type of testing is never without the intent to refine the character of a positive believer by challenging his faith. For the negative believer such pressure would be discipline designed to motivate rebound recovery. Abraham was up to the challenge of the former:

Genesis 22:9 - Then they [**Abraham, Isaac, and two attendants**] came to the place of which God had told them; and Abraham built the altar there, and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood.

Genesis 22:10 - And Abraham stretched out his hand, and took a knife to slay his son.

v. 11 - But the angel of the Lord [**a theophany of Jesus Christ**] called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

v. 12 - And He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son from Me."

Abraham had been placed under a maximum level of testing and had passed the test. However, from the standpoint of the casual observer this testing not only seems to be unusually demanding but also quite dangerous.

It must be remembered that the Lord knew what He was doing. With omniscience He knew beforehand that Abraham had the doctrine and the strength of faith to execute the commandment. The Lord had no intention of allowing Abraham to follow thorough on the assignment. The issue was to put Abraham in a situation where his faith would be put to the test. If he complied then the Lord would know that Abraham's faith was strong enough to obey the most pretentious of commands that would result in the severest consequences and require the most arduous means of execution. If Abraham could pass this test then whatever else he would face later on would be rendered insignificant by comparison.

We do not know the strength of our doctrinal inventory until we are forced to use it under pressure. When we have faith in the guidance provided by the doctrine that we know and are willing to apply it to the exigencies we face on a daily basis we prove nothing to God that He doesn't already know. We prove it to ourselves and as we do the strength of our faith increases so that we can handle more demanding tests later on.

What Abraham has done, like Job before him, is pass the Old Testament equivalent of evidence testing.

And what was the doctrinal rationale that Abraham applied in his use of the faith-rest drill on Mount Moriah? We lean the answer from:

Hebrews 11:17 - By means of faith-rest in doctrinal rationales, Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son;

v. 18 - it was he to whom it was said, [**Genesis 21:12**] "In Isaac you descendants shall be called."

We translate "doctrinal rationales" in the plural on this occasion for a reason. Abraham will apply several doctrines in order to reach a doctrinal conclusion that will enable him to go forward in compliance with the Lord's order to sacrifice Isaac.

Here we see in the Greek that Abraham was being tested. The word is the present passive participle of the verb **πειράζω, peirazō** whose definition is virtually the same as the Hebrew *nasah*: "to try someone; to put to the test in order to assess one's value."

The application of this kind of testing is described as follows by:

Friedrich, Gerhard (ed.). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968), 6:25:

πειράζω, peirazō: Complete submission to God's will, even in incomprehensible suffering, constitutes the essence of the obedience demanded. With this the test is passed. When a man is tested, it is his readiness to commit himself wholly to God which is on trial.

Under this testing when Abraham prepared to sacrifice Isaac his first doctrinal rationale is stated in the phrase "and he who had received the promises."

Abraham had received two unconditional and immutable covenants from God: (1) the Abrahamic which promised that he would be the patriarch of a great nation in Genesis 12:3 and (2) that this nation would occupy a Promised Land described in Genesis 15:18-21; 17:6-8.

These covenants were later granted to Isaac when the Lord informed Abraham and Sarah that she would become pregnant with a son. Abraham, who was 100 years old, did not believe this at the time and offered this compromise:

Genesis 17: 18 - And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before Thee!"

Genesis 17:19 - But God said, "No, but Sarah you wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him."

Typology is also introduced in Hebrews 11:17 when Isaac is described as Abraham's "only begotten son" who he "offered up" as a sacrifice.

The second doctrinal rational appears in verse 18 where the Abrahamic covenant is again confirmed through Isaac—not through Ishmael: "Through Isaac your descendants shall be called." Isaac has to be alive for these promises to be kept.

Abraham was confident that because of the two covenants given to Him by God that there was no way that the sacrifice of Isaac could possibly prevent them from being fulfilled, not only to him but also to Isaac and his descendants.

It is from these rationales that Abraham reached the doctrinal conclusion that enabled him to with faith, obedience, and confidence go through the process of sacrificing Isaac on Mount Moriah. This doctrinal conclusion is stated in:

Hebrews 11:19 - Abraham considered that God is able [through omnipotence] to raise men [e.g., Isaac] even from the dead [resurrection]; from which he also received him back [Isaac was recalled from the sacrificial wooden altar on Moriah] as a type [Isaac became a teaching aid to illustrate the sacrifice of the Messiah on the wooden cross of Calvary].

There is great power in the resurrection. It verifies the satisfaction of the Father with our Lord's sacrificial work on the cross, it guarantees our eternal future, and in the scrum of the Angelic Conflict it provides a major doctrinal rationale that can be used as a problem-solving device.

Abraham's ability to put grace into action and rely unswervingly on the immutability and veracity of God's Word enabled him to pass evidence testing and become the only person in Scripture specifically designated as the friend of God: Isaiah 41:8; 2 Chronicles 20:7, and James 2:23.

The Hebrew word is אָהַב *'ahav* whose primary meaning is love and in the first two passages refer to God's personal love for one who is totally devoted to Him.

The Greek word in James 2:23 is φίλος, *philos* and means "friend." It carries with it the idea of a "dependable companion," "one who proves faithful," and "one who holds a position of trust."

The Lord learned through the test he gave Abraham that He could trust him. At the same time, Abraham learned that he could trust the Lord. From such trust comes friendship. And this friendship was built on Abraham's faith and trust in the Lord to honor His promises through a doctrinal rationale that placed absolute confidence in the resurrection of the believer.

E. Joseph

Joseph demonstrated his confidence in the resurrection of the saints by his last will and testament which required that his body be withheld from burial until after the Jews entered into the Promised Land.

The fact that the Israelites honored his request confirms their confidence as well. We see Joseph's last request documented in:

Genesis 50:24 - And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you, and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."

v. 25 - Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, "God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones up from here."

v. 26 - So Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years; and he was embalmed and place in a coffin in Egypt.

Joseph's thinking, too, was focused on the faith-rest drill. His doctrinal rationales were similar to Abraham's. He was confident that the Palestinian covenant would be fulfilled therefore he knew his brothers would eventually return to the land. Consequently, he gave the order that he was not to be buried in Egypt but in the Promised Land.

Little did Joseph know that the Israelites would spend 430 years in Egyptian captivity and then another 40 years wandering through the Sinai *Jornada*.

When the Israelites left Egypt, Joseph's coffin was at the head of the column:

Exodus 13:19 - Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had made the sons of Israel solemnly swear, saying, "God shall surely take care of you; and you shall carry my bones from here with you."

For forty years the Israelites carried Joseph's coffin around the *Jornada* and finally into the land of Canaan. Once the country was conquered we find that Joseph's wishes were finally carried out in:

Joshua 24:32 - Now they buried the bones of Joseph, which the sons of Israel brought up from Egypt, at Shechem \shē' kem\, in the piece of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor \hā' more\ the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of money; and they became the inheritance of Joseph's sons.

This entire episode is a testimony to Joseph's belief in the resurrection as well as for those Israelites who carried his coffin around for 470 years. Because of his confidence in the resurrection and his confidence that the Israelites would eventually conquer the land, Joseph knew if his remains were returned to Canaan then at the command of the Messiah he would be resurrected with his brethren from the family plot at Shechem.

Hebrews 11:22 - By means of faith-rest in doctrinal conclusions Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.

f. Conclusion

Some believers at Corinth were busily denying the very doctrinal rationale that sustained the four faith-rest heroes we have highlighted today. Paul's debater's technique in 1 Corinthians 15:13-19 effectively exposed the fallacy of their contention that there was no bodily resurrection. If this were true, asserts Paul, then:

- 1) "even Christ has not been raised" (v. 13-17),
- 2) their "faith also is vain" (v. 14),
- 3) their "faith is worthless" (v. 17),
- 4) they "are still in their sins" (v. 17),
- 5) those who have died "have perished" (v. 18), and
- 6) "we are of all men most to be pitied" (v. 19).

Paul then refutes these heresies with a bold statement of biblical and historical fact:

1 Corinthians 15:20 - But now Christ has been raised [**intensive perfect passive indicative of the verb ἐγείρω, egeirō**] from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.

That this is a statement of absolute truth is proved by the perfect passive indicative of the verb ἐγείρω, *egeirō*, which means "to be raised" and, with the prepositional phrase "from the dead," it refers to the Lord's resurrection.

The Greek perfect tense presents an action as having reached its termination and existing in it finished results. Here the verb *egeirō* is an intensive perfect which places emphasis upon these existing results as a finished product. It is a strong way of saying that a thing is. The thing is that Jesus Christ has been resurrected and emphasizes that He remains resurrected in hypostatic union at the right hand of the Father.

The passive voice indicates that it was by the power of God the Father and God the Holy Spirit that the Lord received the action of being resurrected "from the dead."

The indicative mood is a statement of fact and thus a documentation of biblical and historical reality.

From this study we have demonstrated from four Old Testament faith-rest heroes how their worldview was formed by their absolute confidence in the resurrection of the dead. From Paul's defense of the resurrection of Christ we have retrospective proof of the resurrection of our Lord. And because He is risen so shall we too have a resurrection body come the Rapture of the church. We are on deck for the next scheduled exit resurrection:

1 Corinthians 15:23 - But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,

v. 24 - then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.

Paul's dissertation on resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 is the most extensive in Scripture. His closing crescendo provides a poignant conclusion to our study today. From it we are able to confidently conclude that since Christ has in fact been resurrected we shall also be resurrected "at His coming":

1 Corinthians 15: 50 - Now I say this brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

v. 51 - Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

v. 52 - in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

v. 53 - For this perishable must put on imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

v. 54 - But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory.

v. 55 - "O Death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"

v. 56 - The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law;

v. 57 - But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

v. 58 - Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.

May the assuredness of our Lord's resurrection that has been demonstrated today from Scripture be a source of encouragement and confidence as you celebrate today the event that not only certified our deliverance from sin but also guarantees you a resurrection body in the sweet by-and-by.

May the faith-rest confidence in doctrinal rationales, demonstrated by Old Testament heroes such as Daniel, Job, Abraham, and Joseph and affirmed by Paul, enable you to be even more motivated by the confirmation of the Lord's resurrection which was proclaimed by the angel beside the tomb on that first Easter morning:

Matthew 28:6 - "He is not here, for He has risen.

It is by the grace of God through the love of God that provided Jesus Christ as a Substitute for our sins.

It is by faith in the Lord's Person and work on the cross that appropriates our so great salvation through the ministries of the Holy Spirit.

But it is the Resurrection Factor that offers us proof positive of our eternal future with Him.

Have a happy Easter as you salute our risen Savior and look forward with renewed confidence to the promised resurrection.