

STORY

Isaac's Birth; Abraham offers Isaac - Genesis 21:1-7; 22:1-19

TEACHER PRAYER

Lord God, use me to bring to my students a deeper concept of what You have in mind for us. Help them to comprehend more deeply how You think and operate with us, and lead us to place our lives into Your hands, from which we receive such wonderful blessings. Amen.

VOCABULARY

Seed in the KJV, or descendant in NKJV is the same Hebrew word (offspring, child). Locate geographic names on a display map for students.

OUTER AIM

God strengthened Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac to live their lives dependent upon Him.

INNER AIM

One small step for God/one large step for mankind as Jehovah brought Abraham to revere, love, and trust in Him above/before anyone or anything else.

BACKGROUND (*Rupprecht Bible History References, Vol.1, pp.66-69*)

The point of reviewing God's ways with Abraham is to reveal how God operates. This is not a story of two old people who had a baby and the old man almost killed him, but a revelation of the original pattern of salvation: People are saved by God, into Whose hands they entrust their lives, their futures, and their eternal souls. Abraham and Isaac are original patterns of the *way God thinks about humans and how He operates with us, which is the prime purpose of religion, after all.* (How we think and operate with God is secondary.) Thus Abraham's biography contains milestones in God's routing to outmaneuver the enemy Satan.

After a lot of ups and downs (chs. 14-20) in Abram's life, the great event arrived. By now Ishmael was fourteen, but he was NOT the "one and only" special child the Lord had promised.

vs.1-3

It took special miracles to procreate this baby; for Sarai had never become pregnant during her fertile years and was now in menopause. Miraculously, the LORD saw to it that Sarai and Abram could engender a baby. After a normal pregnancy she gave birth, exactly as the LORD had promised them in 17:16-19, the "one-and-only" son to bear the covenant-promise: *But My covenant I will establish with Isaac* (not with Ishmael), born to Sarah (not to Hagar).

vs.4-7

Additional details: There was a specific requirement for a person to be included in the covenant of grace: a minor operation on the loose skin of the penis. Abraham performed the requirement. This was an external sign of internal, personal dedication of self to the LORD, ch.17:13. Isaac meaning "he laughs," now a source of rejoicing to an aged woman and the 100 yr. old father.

vs. 8-9

Isaac's passing from infancy to childhood was celebrated in the traditional way.

Hagar's teenager thought it ridiculous that he as firstborn would lose his spot to the new baby.



The sacrifice of Isaac, Ch. 22: 1-19

Secure against Ishmael's threat, Isaac grew into adulthood sheltered in the love of his parents.

v.1

We deduce that the LORD was not toying with Abraham, but that this test was necessary for Abraham's soul-care. The father's love for his one and only son needed adjusting lest it displace his love and respect for the LORD.

vs.2-5

There can be no doubt as to God's intent, for He spelled it out in detail. Thus Abraham was not in trouble with God (5th and 8th commandments) in telling his servants that the lad would return, for he was fully convinced that after he killed Isaac, God would raise him back to life (Heb.11:17-19).

vs.6-8

Although Isaac was perplexed, Abraham's loving response helped him maintain the highest trust.

vs.9-12

Step by step, Abraham moved forward with faith in the LORD; Isaac submitted out of confidence in his father. It was no game-playing for Abraham to build the altar, bind Isaac upon it, and raise the knife for a fatal stab. The LORD has seen into his heart: *Now I know* speaks of knowledge based on the evidence, just as His final judgment will be based on evidence of actions. (Deeds are the product of motives, which are engineered in the powerplant-heart; and the engineer for spiritual activity is the LORD.) Jehovah had won over Abraham's heart to love and revere Him above and beyond even his dearly beloved one and only son.

vs.13-14

The substituted animal, providentially provided, was returned to the LORD as a thank-offering for all His goodness. (Jesus had no such substitute, for the stakes were too high to allow it.)

By time Moses wrote this account, it had become a proverbial saying full of Messianic meaning: "In the hill of Jehovah provision is made."

v.15

The Angel of the LORD, identifying Himself as God (both here and in vv.11-12), took an oath on Himself. This level of assurance occurs only twice elsewhere in Scripture! He reaffirmed the blessings of ch.12, reaching the zenith in "*all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in your seed,*" the seed identified as Jesus in Galatians 3:16.

v.16 As this chapter in his life closes, Abraham is at home in Beersheba, chastened and strengthened by the experience on Moriah, the child of God who has become the hero of faith, the exemplar for every generation of God's sons and daughters.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Lord Jesus, I would really like You to direct me just as you did Abraham. I probably don't need a vision or a direct visit, so I'll try to content myself with Your words given me in the Bible. Help me to learn how to apply Scripture to my life, just as I apply Your love to my life. Thanks for everything. Amen.

PRESENTATION

Abraham's Faith

This is not the story of an old man who almost murdered his boy, nor is it a Jewish legend of a blood-thirsty God who enjoyed torturing people. Rather, we see here that our LORD was following a faith-building program to strengthen and toughen Abraham to depend on **His** best judgment in all situations. (Modern bodybuilders understand the value of stressing muscles in order to strengthen. Olympic-class athletes get there by heroic exercise regimens.) These two selected episodes from the chronicles of Abraham will be understood and properly evaluated (at least by the teacher, maybe also by the student) only by rehearsing some of the other highlights in God's program of strength-training for Abraham--chapters twelve through twenty-one.

That is, when he left his fatherland with its familiar comforts...when he gave up his ties to family and tribe...when he endured the privation of childlessness...when he lost contact with nephew Lot...when he lost Ishmael as the potential "chosen seed"...(plus a lot more) each step of the way the LORD assisted, nurtured, and assured Abraham that He would take care of the whole program, even in the details, so that by the time of the sacrifice of Isaac, Abraham had been strengthened enough (in relying on the LORD) to be able to give up his one-and-only boy, if God so requested it.

God's Promises

Promises are meant to be kept. A promise-maker is obligated for two reasons: to prove the promise-maker reliable, and to benefit the person receiving the promise. That's how God works--whether in small or large promises; God does not make a promise He won't or can't keep; so when He pledges Himself to do the job of saving our souls and to be our Helper in all earthly needs, we can bank on it that He will keep His word.

Human Limitations

Perhaps one of your students has a handicap. Can God turn a handicap into a good tool in His service? Certainly! (I have seen a preacher severely handicapped with cerebral palsy deliver a tremendous sermon entitled: "I'M NOT O.K.; YOU'RE not O.K.") Every child of God has his/her limitations; even the apostle Paul had a severe one, and God let it bother Paul all his life because Paul had enough of God's grace to carry him past/over/around his handicap to become the greatest soul-winner in the early Christian Church.

APPLICATION

1. Why do we spend time learning about Abraham and Isaac? Through such examples we can learn how God functions. Just as we learn the laws of gravity, electricity and magnetism, light and heat, the ecosystem, etc., so that we use and make applications of these laws to ourselves, so we learn of God's ways with sinners in order to apply His rule of grace to our own salvation.

2. Since there are notable correspondences between Isaac and Jesus, a special reason for placing this OT episode into the series is to help us concentrate on our Savior. Some similarities are:

- each was the "one-and-only" son of the father;
- each was long-promised and long-awaited;
- each bore the promise of bringing blessings to all nations;
- no human substitute dare take his place (not Ishmael for Isaac/not anyone imperfect for Jesus);
- each submitted obediently to the father's will (as a lamb to the slaughter);
- each to be sacrificed on Moriah (the site of the temple in Jerusalem);
- Isaac was as good as dead until the third day; Jesus physically dead until the third day;
- each returned to his father to carry out his life's purpose.

In these ways Isaac is a type of Jesus, and Jesus is the prototype for Isaac.

3. It's a miracle when a baby is born (and it is the sin of murder to choose to abort); Isaac's birth was almost as big a miracle as the virgin birth of Jesus. This demonstrates that God ignores human limitations when He chooses to do so in order to get His salvation program moving forward or to pass it on from one soul to another.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

John 3:16 - *For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

Matthew 3:17 - *And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

Galatians 4:28 - *Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise.*

Middle - any of the above and ...

Hebrews 11:17-19 - *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only-begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead....*

Hebrews 11:1 - *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

Phil. 2:13 *for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*

Upper - any of the above and ..

Hebrews 6:13 - *For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you."*

Hebrews 12:5-7 - *My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and Scourges every son whom He receives." If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?*

HYMN CHOICES

"My God, My Father, While I Stray" (TLH #418: 1,3,4,7)

"From God Shall Naught Divide Me" (TLH #393: 1,3)

"I Will Sing My Maker's Praises" (TLH #25: 3,6)

"Commit Whatever Grieves Thee" (TLH #520: 8,10)

"The Will Of God Is Always Best" (TLH #517:1,2)