

DAILY BIBLE ILLUSTRATIONS

by

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Ninth Week -- Tuesday

ABRAHAM AND ISAAC

"Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, 'Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' Then He said, 'Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.' So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him" (Genesis 22:1-3).

Isaac, the heir of the promises, has grown up to be a young man, probably not less than twenty years of age. Abraham rests happy in his tents blessed with the favor of god and beholding in Isaac the accomplishment of all his hopes. Suddenly the command comes, *"Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."* Every word was fit to break his heart. And what did Abraham reply? Nothing. He did as he was commanded.

Abraham was not only obedient, but prompt and thoughtful in his obedience. He prepares everything before he sets out, even the wood to form the fire which is to consume his son. He appears to be anxious that there should be no sign of reluctance or lingering delay on his part. Early in the morning he rises and saddles his donkey for the journey. Taking two servants with him, he and Isaac speed on their way.

Two days they journeyed, and on the third Abraham lifted up his eyes and beheld the place far off. Moriah, as we know, was the name of one of the hills of Jerusalem, and thus there can be little or no question that it was in or near the site of the future city. And this particular spot was not likely to have been chosen without a special object in mind--that it was the very same on which a Father greater than Abraham would offer up a Son more illustrious than Isaac.

Here the servants were bidden to wait, and the father and son went on, Isaac bearing on his strong shoulders the wood and Abraham having in one hand the fire with which the wood was to be kindled and in the other the knife with which to slay the sacrifice. But where was the victim? Abraham knew but Isaac did not, and so naturally he asks his father. The answer was, *"My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering."* This would seem to intimate

that he expected some such substitution as actually took place; and we do know that he was so assured that God would faithfully perform the promises to which the life of Isaac was essential, that he was satisfied that his son could not be eventually lost to him. As it cannot be doubted that he was fully determined to carry out his obedience, even to the extent of sacrificing his son, he must have expected that God would raise Isaac from the dead, as the apostle intimates. Abraham was prepared to believe anything possible rather than that God could be unfaithful to his pledged word.

They arrive at the spot. The altar is made, the wood laid upon it, and Isaac is bound and laid upon the altar. The father's hand is lifted up to fall upon the life of his son, but it falls not, for the stroke is stopped by a quick and sudden word from heaven. *"Abraham, Abraham! Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me"* (vv. 11,12). With fingers trembling with gladness, Abraham unbound his son; and with what rejoicing spirits did both father and son take part in offering up the ram which the Lord *had* provided.

Then came down the great and rewarding words: *"By Myself I have sworn, says Yahweh, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son--blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice"* (vv.16-18).

Perhaps this was not all of Abraham's reward. Some suppose that it was on this occasion that he saw the day of Christ and was glad (John 8:56), his eyes being opened to behold the purposes of God in that great and solemn act of atoning sacrifice through his well-beloved Son, which this transaction might very well typify or represent. If indeed Abraham was thus instructed (as the words of our Lord permit us to suppose), there seems no other occasion in the whole history of the patriarch on which it was so likely to be afforded.

Let it not escape our notice that Isaac himself was a willing victim. There can be no question that in the last awful moments Abraham communicated the truth to his son, and that Isaac consented to yield obedience to the command of God and the authority of his father. This is implied in the fact of his consenting to be bound, for he was grown to strength and manhood and might easily, without violence, have escaped from his father's hands and fled away. Much may be allowed for the absolute authority of a parent in those ages, even to life and death over his own son, but to the young life is still very sweet. If not for the high sense of duty to God, which such a son was likely to acquire from such a father, Isaac would scarcely have been so passive in this transaction.