

No pains, no gains – no cross, no crown...

Genesis 22: 1 – 23: 20, 25: 1 - 11

Several years have elapsed; Abraham and his family have been living in a tent by the well of Beersheba. True to his name, Isaac has brought laughter into their family circle. Suddenly like a thunderbolt comes this word from God. Abraham can hardly believe his ears: God says, "Now take your son Isaac, and go to Mount Moriah and offer him up on that mountain." Mount Moriah is the place where in later years King David bought the threshing floor as the site of the temple, and where King Solomon later built the temple. Today there stands the Dome of the Rock, a mosque built over the great rock that formed the altar upon which Abraham offered Isaac. It is from this same rock that Muslims believe Mohammed and his horse ascended to heaven...

Abraham tested (Genesis 22: 1 – 19)

The story begins so innocently – we never know when God will test us, or how, or why. God said, “Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love...” each phrase like a fresh twist of the knife in Abraham’s heart. God always seems to demand what we love most...

- What do you notice about Abraham’s initial response? How do you explain the apparent calm that he displayed, as he went through the awful steps to the sacrifice of his son? There is a clue in verse 5; see also Hebrews 11 v 17 – 19.
- The LORD Will Provide – *Jehovah Jireh*. “God himself will provide the lamb...” (v 8). What New Testament parallel is evident from this story? See John 3 v 16.
- How did God reward Abraham’s faith, obedience and devotion?

The death of Sarah (Genesis 23: 1 - 20)

What a bitter day it is when a man buries his wife! It is perhaps the lowest point ever reached by the human spirit, and the sunset of all earth's hopes and expectations. In Genesis 23 we stand beside Abraham as he weeps at the grave of Sarah...

- It is said that the well of grief is fed by the springs of memory. What are some of the memories that passed through Abraham’s mind as he grieved for Sarah? “Then Abraham rose... and spoke to the Hittites” (v 3). What does Abraham’s decisive action suggest?
- The (pagan) Hittites referred to Abraham as “a mighty prince” (v 6). Why do you think they had such respect for Abraham?

The death of Abraham (Genesis 25: 1 – 11)

- After Sarah died, Abraham lived another 40 years, remarried (Keturah) and had six more sons, each to become the father of a nation. Which of God’s earlier promises was thus literally fulfilled?

At the end of Abraham’s life, although he owned the land of Canaan (Israel) by promise, the only part he actually possessed was the field and cave where he buried his wife, and where he himself was later buried. This is a picture of the man of faith, a pilgrim and ‘foreigner’ to the end, who looked forward “to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (Hebrews 11 v 10). Paul expresses the same attitude when he writes: “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth...” (Colossians 3 v 2).