

ENGAGING GOSPEL DOCTRINE 86.2

Lesson 9: Binding of Isaac (Study Notes); "God Will Provide Himself a Lamb"

Class Member Reading: Abraham 1; Genesis 15, 16, 17, 21, 22; Hebrews 11:17-19; James 2:21-23; Jacob 4:5

Abraham 1

Since we have already gone through this chapter I will this time focus on the portions relating to the sacrifice of Isaac.

1 In the land of the Chaldeans, at the residence of my fathers, I, Abraham, saw that it was needful for me to obtain another place of residence; **Understatement! (1:30 offhandedly mentions his father tried to kill him. As a sacrifice?)**

2 And, finding there was greater happiness and peace and rest for me, I sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same; having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge, and to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers.

3 It was conferred upon me from the fathers; it came down from the fathers, from the beginning of time, yea, even from the beginning, or before the foundation of the earth, down to the present time, even the right of the firstborn, or the first man, who is Adam, or first father, through the fathers unto me.

4 I sought for mine appointment unto the Priesthood according to the appointment of God unto the fathers concerning the seed.

5 My fathers, having turned from their righteousness, and from the holy commandments which the Lord their God had given unto them, unto the **worshipping of the gods of the heathen**, utterly refused to hearken to my voice; **This is highly anachronistic...even the Genesis account of Abraham doesn't claim he was a monotheist! In fact, the way he worships suggests the opposite.**

6 For their hearts were set to do evil, and were wholly turned to the god of Elkenah, and the god of Libnah, and the god of Mahmackrah, and the god of Korash, and the god of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; **Other than Pharaoh these names are otherwise unknown (and we know a great deal about Egyptian mythology)**

7 Therefore they turned their hearts to the sacrifice of the heathen in offering up their

children unto these dumb idols , and hearkened not unto my voice, but endeavored to take away my life by the hand of the priest of Elkenah. The priest of Elkenah was also the priest of Pharaoh. In the Old Testament “dumb idols” only occurs in Habbakkuk, which was written about 600. The middle of Isaiah also employs similar imagery.

8 Now, at this time it was the custom of the priest of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, to offer up upon the altar which was built in the land of Chaldea, for the offering unto these strange gods, men, women, and children. Human sacrifice was indeed practiced in the Ancient Near East. Note that though Pharaoh is worshipped this is happening in Mesopotamia, not Egypt.

9 And it came to pass that the priest made an offering unto the god of Pharaoh, and also unto the god of Shagreel, even after the manner of the Egyptians. Now the god of Shagreel was the sun. It is pretty clear these names are made up.

10 Even the thank-offering of a child (what horrifying wording) did the **priest of Pharaoh** offer upon the altar which stood by the hill called Potiphar’s Hill, at the head of the plain of Olishem. The name Potiphar is not known outside the Joseph narrative (Abraham’s great-grandson)

11 Now, this priest had offered upon this altar three virgins at one time, who were the daughters of Onitah, one of the royal descent directly from the loins of Ham. These virgins were offered up because of their virtue; they would not bow down to worship gods of wood or of stone, therefore they were killed upon this altar, and it was done after the manner of the Egyptians. I will stop there. There is value in the Book of Abraham, but it doesn’t take much examination to come to the conclusion that the details seem invented.

12 And it came to pass that **the priests** laid violence upon me, that they might slay me also, as they did those virgins upon this altar; and that you may have a knowledge of this altar, I will refer you to the representation at the commencement of this record.

13 It was made after the form of a bedstead, such as was had among the Chaldeans, and it stood before the gods of Elkenah, Libnah, Mahmackrah, Korash, and also a god like unto that of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

14 That you may have an understanding of these gods, I have given you the fashion of them in the figures at the beginning, which manner of figures is called by the Chaldeans Rahleenos, which signifies hieroglyphics. The detail in these accounts is striking, and sounds more like someone trying to explain images rather than recounting events.

15 And as they lifted up their hands upon me, that they might offer me up and take away my life, behold, I lifted up my voice unto the Lord my God, and the Lord hearkened and heard, and he filled me with the vision of the Almighty, and the angel of his presence stood by me, and immediately unloosed my bands;

16 And his voice was unto me: Abraham, Abraham, behold, my name is Jehovah, and I

have heard thee, and have come down to deliver thee, and to take thee away from thy father's house, and from all thy kinsfolk, into a strange land which thou knowest not of;

17 And **this because they have turned their hearts away from me**, to worship the god of Elkenah, and the god of Libnah, and the god of Mahmackrah, and the god of Korash, and the god of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; therefore I have come down to visit them, and to destroy him who hath lifted up his hand against thee, Abraham, my son, to take away thy life. **This level of divine intervention is striking...note the issue at hand is turning away from God toward idols. The challenge of miraculous stories of divine intervention is that it begs the question: Why doesn't God intervene to save the innocent more often?**

18 Behold, I will lead thee by my hand, and I will take thee, to put upon thee my name, even the Priesthood of thy father, and my power shall be over thee. **Intimate language.**

19 As it was with Noah so shall it be with thee; but through thy ministry my name shall be known in the earth forever, for I am thy God.

20 Behold, Potiphar's Hill was in the land of Ur, of Chaldea. And the Lord broke down the altar of Elkenah, and of the gods of the land, and utterly destroyed them, and smote the priest that he died; and there was great mourning in Chaldea, and also in the court of Pharaoh; which Pharaoh signifies king by royal blood. **Pharaoh heard about this all the way from Egypt? And again, extraordinarily direct divine intervention. God is actually right there smashing stuff up.**

21 Now this king of Egypt was a descendant from the loins of Ham, and was a partaker of the blood of the Canaanites by birth. **The Canaanites were the people who lived in what is now Israel and Syria. According to Genesis 10 "Egypt" is the son of Ham (So harmonizing the texts Ham had a son Egypt and a daughter Egyptus?), so the narratives don't line up (not that it would mean much if they did). In short, what struck me on this reading is how the details of this story are fraught with problems.**

22 From this descent sprang all the Egyptians, and thus the blood of the Canaanites was preserved in the land.

23 The land of Egypt being first discovered by a woman, who was the daughter of Ham, and the daughter of Egyptus, which in the Chaldean signifies Egypt, which signifies that which is forbidden; ?

24 When this woman discovered the land it was under water, who afterward settled her sons in it; and thus, from Ham, sprang that race which preserved the curse in the land.

25 Now the first government of Egypt was established by Pharaoh, the eldest son of Egyptus, the daughter of Ham, and it was after the manner of the government of Ham, which was patriarchal.

26 Pharaoh, being a righteous man, established his kingdom and judged his people

wisely and justly all his days, seeking earnestly to imitate that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first patriarchal reign, even in the reign of Adam, and also of Noah, his father, who blessed him with the blessings of the earth, and with the blessings of wisdom, but cursed him as pertaining to the Priesthood.

27 Now, Pharaoh being of that lineage by which he could not have the right of Priesthood, notwithstanding the Pharaohs would fain claim it from Noah, through Ham, therefore my father was led away by their idolatry; [Lots to untangle here](#).

28 But I shall endeavor, hereafter, to delineate the chronology running back from myself to the beginning of the creation, for the records have come into my hands, which I hold unto this present time.

29 Now, after the priest of Elkenah was smitten that he died, there came a fulfilment of those things which were said unto me concerning the land of Chaldea, that there should be a famine in the land.

30 Accordingly a famine prevailed throughout all the land of Chaldea, and my father was sorely tormented because of the famine, and he repented of the evil which he had determined against me, **to take away my life**. [I can't find an explicit mention that Abraham's father tried to sacrifice him to other gods, but this reference plus 1:5 does lead to that extrapolation.](#)

31 But the records of the fathers, even the patriarchs, concerning the right of Priesthood, the Lord my God preserved in mine own hands; therefore a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, and also of the planets, and of the stars, as they were made known unto the fathers, have I kept even unto this day, and I shall endeavor to write some of these things upon this record, for the benefit of my posterity that shall come after me.

[Genesis 15, 16, 17, 21, 22](#)

(Since everyone has access to the KJV and this is a longer reading assignment (yay!) I will comment on the NRSV.

God's Covenant with Abram

[Since we have discussed these passages before I am going to focus on the portions most pertinent to the sacrifice of Isaac. The way the narrative builds up tension is exquisite.](#)

15After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, 'Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.' ²But Abram said, 'O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for **I continue childless, and the heir of my**

house is Eliezer of Damascus?³And Abram said, **‘You have given me no offspring,** and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir.’⁴But the word of the LORD came to him, ‘This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir.’⁵He brought him outside and said, ‘Look towards heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’⁶And he believed the LORD; and theLORD reckoned it to him as righteousness. *Note how this builds up...Abraham has no heir, and then he is promised he will have his own son. He does through Hagar, so has an heir, but again that isn’t God’s answer...Abraham will have an heir with his wife, Sarah.*

⁷ Then he said to him, ‘I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess.’⁸But he said, ‘O Lord GOD, **how am I to know** that I shall possess it?’⁹He said to him, ‘Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon.’¹⁰He brought him all these and cut them in two, laying each half over against the other; but he did not cut the birds in two.¹¹And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

¹² As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a deep and terrifying darkness descended upon him.¹³Then the LORD said to Abram, ‘Know this for certain, that **your offspring** shall be aliens in a land that is not theirs, and shall be slaves there, and they shall be oppressed for four hundred years; ¹⁴but I will bring judgement on the nation that they serve, and afterwards they shall come out with great possessions.¹⁵As for yourself, you shall go to your ancestors in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age.¹⁶And they shall come back here in the fourth generation; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.’ *Such foresight... Abraham is fretting over his childlessness, and God is predicting the suffering and redemption of his descendants.*

¹⁷ When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking fire-pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces.¹⁸On that day theLORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates,¹⁹the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, ²⁰the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, ²¹the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.’

With Sarah giving Hagar to Abraham to conceive an heir we have the next act of the drama.

The Birth of Ishmael

16 Now **Sarai, Abram's wife, bore him no children.** She had an Egyptian slave-girl whose name was Hagar, ²and Sarai said to Abram, 'You see that the LORD has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my slave-girl; it may be that I shall **obtain children by her.**' And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. ³So, after Abram had lived for ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her slave-girl, and **gave her to her husband Abram as a wife.** (The Hebrew word for "wife" is simply "woman", so it is impossible to distinguish between full wife and concubine) ⁴He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. ⁵Then Sarai said to Abram, 'May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my slave-girl to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the LORD judge between you and me!' ⁶But Abram said to Sarai, 'Your slave-girl is in your power; do to her as you please.' Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she ran away from her. *The familial, intimate struggles and infighting bear a poignant realism.*

⁷ The angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. ⁸And he said, 'Hagar, slave-girl of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?' She said, 'I am running away from my mistress Sarai.' ⁹The angel of the LORD said to her, 'Return to your mistress, and submit to her.' ¹⁰The angel of the LORD also said to her, 'I will so greatly multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude.' ¹¹And the angel of the LORD said to her, 'Now you have conceived and shall bear a son; you shall call him Ishmael, for the LORD has given heed to your affliction.

¹² He shall be a wild ass of a man, with his hand against everyone, and everyone's hand against him; and he shall live at odds with all his kin.'

¹³So she named the LORD who spoke to her, 'You are El-roi'; for she said, 'Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?' ¹⁴Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; it lies between Kadesh and Bered. *Fascinating parallel promises to Ishmael. God also intervenes, makes promises. Note how similar the wording is. There is also very interesting reverse Exodus foreshadowing here. It is worth mentioning that in Islam, *Ishmael* is the child of covenantal promise.*

15 Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. ¹⁶Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael. *The passing of time increases the tension and drama.*

The Sign of the Covenant

17When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the **LORD appeared** to Abram, and said to him, 'I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. ²And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you **exceedingly numerous.**' ³Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, ⁴'As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the **ancestor of a multitude of nations.** ⁵No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ⁶I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. ⁷I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. ⁸And I will give to you, and to your offspring after you, the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding; and I will be their God.' *Notice the repetition here. Imagine the years upon years of disappointment. And God appears again and makes grander promises than ever before.*

⁹ God said to Abraham, 'As for you, you shall keep my covenant, **you and your offspring** after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and **you and your offspring** after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹²Throughout your generations every male among you shall be circumcised when he is eight days old, including the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring. ¹³Both the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money must be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. ¹⁴Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.' *Intense language! Exodus 4:24-26 provides a fascinating hint relating to the origins of circumcision among the Israelites. (Say a few words about circumcision)*

¹⁵ God said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. ¹⁶I will bless her, and moreover **I will give you a son by her.** I will

bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.’ ¹⁷Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, ‘Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?’ ¹⁸And Abraham said to God, ‘O that Ishmael might live in your sight!’ ¹⁹God said, ‘No, but your wife Sarah shall bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac. **This is a huge deal, and the preceding chapters have built up to this moment.** I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him. ²⁰As for Ishmael, I have heard you; I will bless him and make him fruitful and exceedingly numerous; he shall be the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. ²¹But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this season next year.’ ²²And when he had finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham.

²³ Then Abraham took his son Ishmael and all the slaves born in his house or bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham’s house, and he circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very day, as God had said to him. ²⁴Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. ²⁵And his son Ishmael was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. ²⁶That very day Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised; ²⁷and all the men of his house, slaves born in the house and those bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.

The Birth of Isaac

²¹The LORD dealt with Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as he had promised. **Note the repetition.** ²Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him.³Abraham gave the name Isaac to his son whom Sarah bore him. ⁴And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. ⁵Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. ⁶Now Sarah said, ‘God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me.’ ⁷And she said, ‘Who would ever have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.’ **The details and repetition emphasize the miraculous nature of this birth.**

Hagar and Ishmael Sent Away

⁸ The child grew, and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that

Isaac was weaned. ⁹But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac.¹⁰So she said to Abraham, ‘Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac.’¹¹The matter was very distressing to Abraham on account of his son.¹²But God said to Abraham, ‘Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named after you. ¹³As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring.’ ¹⁴So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. **Relational tension and divine encouragement and promises.**

¹⁵ When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. ¹⁶Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, ‘Do not let me look on the death of the child.’ And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. ¹⁷And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, ‘What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. ¹⁸Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him.’ ¹⁹Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink. **Parallel themes... Ishmael is also watched over.**

20 God was with the boy, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow. ²¹He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

Abraham and Abimelech Make a Covenant

²² At that time Abimelech, with Phicol the commander of his army, said to Abraham, ‘God is with you in all that you do; ²³now therefore swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me or with my offspring or with my posterity, but as I have dealt loyally with you, you will deal with me and with the land where you have resided as an alien.’²⁴And Abraham said, ‘I swear it.’

²⁵ When Abraham complained to Abimelech about a well of water that Abimelech’s servants had seized, ²⁶Abimelech said, ‘I do not know who has done this; you did not tell me, and I have not heard of it until today.’ ²⁷So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave

them to Abimelech, and the two men made a covenant. ²⁸Abraham set apart seven ewe lambs of the flock. ²⁹And Abimelech said to Abraham, 'What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs that you have set apart?'³⁰He said, 'These seven ewe lambs you shall accept from my hand, in order that you may be a witness for me that I dug this well.'³¹Therefore that place was called Beer-sheba; because there both of them swore an oath. ³²When they had made a covenant at Beer-sheba, Abimelech, with Phicol the commander of his army, left and returned to the land of the Philistines. ³³Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beer-sheba, and called there on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God.³⁴And Abraham resided as an alien for many days in the land of the Philistines.

The Command to Sacrifice Isaac

And now we have this climatic moment. After the years, decades of delayed promises, after the precious child of promise is born and grown, we have this horrible, inexplicable narrative (walk through it and point out details).

²²After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, 'Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' ²He said, 'Take 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 that I shall show you.' ³So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; he cut the wood for the burnt-offering, and set out and went to the place in the distance that God had shown him. ⁴On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place far away. ⁵Then Abraham said to his young men, 'Stay here with the donkey; the boy and I will go over there; we will worship, and then we will come back to you.' ⁶Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering and laid it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. ⁷Isaac said to his father Abraham, 'Father!' And he said, 'Here I am, my son.' He said, 'The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?' ⁸Abraham said, 'God himself will provide the lamb for a burnt-offering, my son.' So the two of them walked on together.

⁹ When they came to the place that God had shown him, Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. He bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son. ¹¹But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' ¹²He said, 'Do not lay your hand on the boy 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.’ ¹³And Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns. Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt-offering instead of his son. ¹⁴So Abraham called that place ‘The LORD will provide’; as it is said to this day, ‘On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.’

¹⁵ The angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven,¹⁶and said, ‘By myself I have sworn, says the LORD: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, (Mention the “When Abraham killed Isaac” post) ¹⁷I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, ¹⁸and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice.’ ¹⁹So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beer-sheba; and Abraham lived at Beer-sheba. (Note that Isaac isn’t mentioned!)

The Children of Nahor

²⁰ Now after these things it was told Abraham, ‘Milcah also has borne children, to your brother Nahor: ²¹Uz the firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram, ²²Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel.’ ²³Bethuel became the father of Rebekah. These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham’s brother. ²⁴Moreover, his concubine, whose name was Reumah, bore Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.

Sarah’s death is mentioned immediately after the account of Isaac’s (near) sacrifice:

²³Sarah lived for one hundred and twenty-seven years; this was the length of Sarah’s life. ²And Sarah died at Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan; and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.

[Hebrews 11:17-19](#)

(see below)

[James 2:21-23](#)

²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? **In a word, no?**

²² Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

²³ And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was

imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

Jacob 4:5

5 Behold, they believed in Christ and worshiped the Father in his name, and also we worship the Father in his name. And for this intent we keep the law of Moses, it pointing our souls to him; and for this cause it is sanctified unto us for righteousness, even as it was accounted unto Abraham in the wilderness to be obedient unto the commands of God in offering up his son Isaac, which is a similitude of God and his Only Begotten Son.

Additional Teacher Reading: [Hebrews 11:8-19](#); [D&C 132:34-36](#)

[Hebrews 11:8-19](#)

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as *in* a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

11 Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, *so many* as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that *country* from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

16 But now they desire a better *country*, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*,

18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:

19 Accounting that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure. **Note the explicit linking of the sacrifice of Isaac with the sacrifice of Jesus. Certainly evocative and powerful.**

[D&C 132:34-36](#)

34 God commanded Abraham, and Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to wife. And why did she do it? Because this was the law; and from Hagar sprang many people. This, therefore, was fulfilling, among other things, the promises.

35 Was Abraham, therefore, under condemnation? Verily I say unto you, Nay; for I, the Lord, commanded it.

36 Abraham was commanded to offer his son Isaac; nevertheless, it was written: Thou shalt not kill. Abraham, however, did not refuse, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness. *I find these verses very problematic. Not sure what to do with them. Certainly don't take them at face value. This is a problematic section of scripture with disturbing details justifying a problematic practice.*

Other Passages: Genesis 15-28 (Isaac's whole story), but the building up chapters were assigned). Skim through it looking for points relating to the sacrifice of Isaac, preferably in a modern translation.

Discussion Outline

I. Sunday School

- a. Push back against the standard use of this narrative. It has value and power, but it is a terrifying, horrible power that forces us to wrestle with difficult issues.
- b. So what can we learn from this story? (Carefully go through this narrative and note details, not costs to the characters, also look carefully at the way this story is presented in LDS scripture, also ways we can productively apply this story to our own lives (it does relate for example to extreme trials, where God "asks us" for our children)
- c. Did Abraham pass or fail the test?
- d. How are this story and the story of Jesus/Atonement similar and different?
- e. Return to the question of God and goodness
- f. Concluding reflections on obedience and sacrifice, how we can discuss this narrative in a constructive way

II. Other Reading

- a. How does this story fit into the Biblical context?
- b. Isaac and history

- c. The Aqedah and human sacrifice
- d. Jewish interpretations of this narrative

III. Study Notes

- a. Deeper reflections on God and goodness (Morality, Euthyphro's dilemma, again)
- b. Obedience (hierarchy of obedience, should we obey without understanding? The role of our own moral sense)
- c. The Aqedah and Atonement (do the same criticisms apply? Could there have been another way? Consequences of Atonement salvation [if death of God is plan A, no plan B])
- d. Conclusion