

Engaging Gospel Doctrine (Episode 86.2)

LESSON 9 (STUDY NOTES)

"God Will Provide Himself a Lamb"

Hook	We consider the familiar to be normal. Thus most members will take from this lesson the suggested principles of obedience, sacrifice, and similitude. Education makes the familiar new, however. In the case of this lesson, we are taking a familiar story and making it horrific and shocking. Or rather not making it so, but rather reminding ourselves of its gripping, haunting meaning.
Goal	The goal of this episode is to help listeners gain benefit from one of the most difficult and disturbing stories in the Bible by acknowledging and wrestling with those elements.
Overview	(see below)
Conclusion	

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 (give an overview of human sacrifice in the ANE)

Other examples to consider in the Bible:

Prohibition:

Lev. 20:2-5 Any of the people of Israel, or of the aliens who reside in Israel, who give any of their offspring to Molech shall be put to death; the people of the land shall stone them to death. I myself will set my face against them, and will cut them off from the people, because they have given of their offspring to Molech, defiling my sanctuary and profaning my holy name. And if the people of the land should ever close their eyes to them, when they give of their offspring to Molech, and do not put them to death, I myself will set my face against them and against their family, and will cut them off from among their people, them and all who follow them in prostituting themselves to Molech.

2 Kings 23:10 [Josiah] defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of Ben-hinnom, so that no one would make a son or a daughter pass through fire as an offering to Molech.

Jer. 32:35

They built the high places of Baal in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to offer up their sons and daughters to Molech, though I did not command them, nor did it enter my mind that they should do this abomination, causing Judah to sin.

Protesting too much?

Ex. 13:2 Consecrate to me all the firstborn; whatever is the first to open the womb among the Israelites, of human beings and animals, is mine.

Judges 11(Jephtah and his daughter)

2 Kings 3:26-27: ²⁶When the king of Moab saw that the battle was going against him, he took with him seven hundred swordsmen to break through, opposite the king of Edom; but they could not. ²⁷Then he took his firstborn son who was to succeed him, and offered him as a burnt-offering on the wall. And great wrath came upon Israel, so they withdrew from him and returned to their own land.

d. Jewish interpretations of this narrative (Look at Jewish Study Bible)

III. Study Notes

- a. Reading, take two
- b. Deeper reflections on God and goodness (Morality, Euthyphro's dilemma, again)
- c. Obedience (hierarchy of obedience, should we obey without understanding? The role of our own moral sense)
- d. 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]
 - i. Radical thought: Could the Atonement be true and needed, and Jesus' death still be an unfortunate accident? (Opens things up theologically)
- e. Conclusion

Resources

In Silence, RadioLab
Rational Faiths post

*(Add when Abraham killed Isaac post)

Get the best sources on Messiah ben Joseph