

Week 9 Abraham's Faith

Romans 4:20

Q33 How old was Abraham when Isaac was born?

A Abraham was a hundred years old when Isaac was born. Gen. 21:1-6

Q34 What did God ask Abraham to do with Isaac?

A God asked Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice to the Lord. Gen. 22:1-2

Q35 How did God provide a substitute for Isaac on the altar?

A God provided a ram caught in a thicket to take Isaac's place. Gen. 22:3-14

Q36 From where did a blessing come to Abraham after he offered his son?

A An angel came from heaven with a blessing for Abraham. Gen. 22:15-18

Monday Week 9 Abraham's Faith

He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; Romans 4:20

Q33 How old was Abraham when Isaac was born?

A Abraham was a hundred years old when Isaac was born. Gen. 21:1-6

Do you know any lady who is ninety years old? What would you think if someone told you that a ninety year old woman was going to have a baby? You would probably think they were joking. You would probably laugh. We don't think of ninety year old ladies having babies. We think of them having great great grandchildren. We don't see women in their nineties going around pushing baby strollers. That's for younger women.

When Sarah, Abraham's wife, was ninety years old, God told her she was going to have a baby. When she heard from the Lord that she was going to have a baby, she laughed. She may have thought it was impossible. Even though she was old, Sarah did have that baby. They named him Isaac. God sometimes does impossible things to show His power. With God, nothing is impossible.

Thinking Deeper

According to *Guinness World Records*, the oldest mother to give birth is a Spanish woman who had twins at age 67. That's pretty old to start raising a baby! Despite the interest we have in world records, we need to be a bit cautious about the supposed validity of some of the records reported.

According to their literature "A fact may only become a Guinness World Record™ when it's tested, verified and elevated above all suspicion." Their reported fact about the world record age of a woman giving birth is 67. In contrast, the Bible tells us that people used to live longer than they do now, and some people had children when they were hundreds of years old. Abraham was one hundred and Sarah was ninety when Isaac came along. But the Guinness records ignore these and many other facts. It could be inferred that, according to them, Biblical accounts and details are not "above suspicion." The Bible is not a category that fits with their way of thinking.

The trouble with this is that as far as the modern world is concerned, the Bible has become marginalized. It is not worthy to consult in matters of factual investigation. It has about the same legitimacy as a fairy tale. Given this view of the Bible, it is no wonder that much of the world leaves it on the shelf collecting dust.

The contrasting worldview of Christian sees the Bible as very relevant to daily life. It is God's revealed word, profitable for "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:16)

Tuesday Week 9 Abraham's Faith

He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; Romans 4:20

Q34 What did God ask Abraham to do with Isaac?

A God asked Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice to the Lord. Gen. 22:1-2

A little boy had a teddy bear that he loved very much. He played with it, took it with him, and even slept with it. Although he hadn't noticed, it had become quite dirty. Its seams were coming apart. An eye was missing. One day his mother said she wanted his teddy bear. He didn't want to give it to her. But he obeyed and gave her his teddy bear. Then how he missed it! What he didn't know was that his mother had a plan for the teddy bear. In a few days she had a surprise for him. She gave his teddy bear back. It had both eyes. Its seams were sewn together. Instead of a dirty grey color, it was clean and white. She had washed it and cleaned it and then gave it back to him. How glad the boy was that he had given his teddy bear to his mother!

By faith Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac to God. But God didn't let Abraham take his son's life. God had a plan for Isaac and had a ram caught in a bush to take Isaac's place as a sacrifice. Abraham was thankful that he had been willing to obey God. God blesses those who obey Him.

Thinking Deeper

In Abraham's day, religious devotion was often marked by the sacrifice of children. The gods would be pleased by great sacrifice. Abraham was devoted to God. Was he as devoted as the worshipers of false gods? When he took Isaac to the mountain he was proving that he was as devout as any other worshipper. He had heard the voice of the true and living God. He could do no less than offer his son. Yet Abraham believed God's promise that through Isaac many nations would be blessed. How could that happen if he sacrificed him? Abraham believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead. So Abraham took the knife to slay his son. At that moment God intervened. He had a substitute sacrifice, a ram caught in the thicket. It was the ram that served in Isaac's place. This was also a picture of how God would provide His Son as a substitute sacrifice for man, when Jesus would go to the cross.

Abraham came away from the mountain with his son alive and with a new view of God. Human sacrifice was not the demand of God. While the worshipers of false gods like Baal and Molech continued to sacrifice children, God instructed His people to offer substitute sacrifices. The value of human life, the value of children, and the value of family was preserved and protected by Abraham's experience on that mountain in the land of Moriah.

Wednesday Week 9 Abraham's Faith

He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; Romans 4:20

Q35 How did God provide a substitute for Isaac on the altar?

A God provided a ram caught in a thicket to take Isaac's place. Gen. 22:3-14

A poor old widow lady ran out of food one day. She knelt by her window and, as was her custom, prayed out loud. "Lord, please send me some food." A man happened by right at that time and heard her prayer. "That woman is foolish," he thought to himself. "She thinks God hears her prayer. I'll pray a trick on her." He went to a store, bought a loaf of bread, then came back and threw it through her window. "She thinks God sent her that bread," he thought as he ran off laughing. The woman took the bread and again knelt to pray. "Lord, I don't know who it was that You sent to get me this bread, but bless him, and thank you for answering my prayer."

God provides for us in various ways. Abraham probably didn't expect to find a substitute sacrifice for his son on top of the mountain, but God had the ram there just at the right time. God will do great things for us as we have faith in Him.

Thinking Deeper

God's ways are often a surprise. Abraham was likely surprised to find the ram in the thicket. Ina Ogden would probably be surprised at how widely her influence has been a blessing. She had been selected to travel a circuit where she would be able to reach thousands of people. Not long before her tour, her father was in an accident. He needed care, and she was the logical caregiver. But it meant cancelling her travel plans. Her hopes for being a blessing were dashed. After a time of adjustment, she made a conscious effort to be a cheerful Christian despite her disappointing circumstances. She never did that extensive travel tour that would have allowed her to bless thousands. But while she was doing her quiet duties, she wrote some words that were eventually put to music. Along with millions of others, you have probably been blessed with her song "Brighten the Corner Where You Are."

God's substitutes for our plans are always better than our plans. It is because Abraham trusted God, that God worked in ways Abraham didn't anticipate. Disappointments, as has been said, are opportunities for God's appointments. God loves us and plans good for us, and not evil. He does work all things for the good of those who love Him. It is our place to follow Abraham's example and believe God.

Thursday Week 9 Abraham's Faith

He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; Romans 4:20

Q36 From where did a blessing come to Abraham after he offered his son?

A An angel came from heaven with a blessing for Abraham. Gen. 22:15-18

Do you know that angels are real? The Bible tells us about many times when angels visited people. Often the ones who were visited fell on their faces when they realized it was an angel. Angels are holy beings who sometimes brought messages to people from God. It was usually a very important message. Abraham had a special visit from an angel after he obeyed God. He must have been surprised and also felt very special. God blessed Abraham in a special way because Abraham believed God.

Thinking Deeper

English literary critic and one time atheist C.S. Lewis experienced something unexpected after he became a Christian. He had been considering the claims of Christ, and the force of the truth that Jesus really was the Son of God brought him, as he said, "kicking and screaming" into the faith. What he hadn't considered was that he would find something in his life that he hadn't had before. Several years before he died, Lewis wrote about his journey to faith. He titled the book *Surprised by Joy* (1956). Lewis found that there was more to the Christian experience than bare faith. God is there, and God reveals Himself to those who come to Him in humble faith. Experiencing "the transcendent," that which is beyond ourselves, or rather *He* who is beyond ourselves, makes an impression that is like no other. He didn't expect it, but C. S. was surprised by joy when he believed God.

Abraham probably didn't expect the blessing he received after he had offered his son. The angel of the Lord confirmed the blessing Abraham was to receive. Abraham's faith opened a great door of blessing.

Friday Week 9 Abraham's Faith

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(Review the Week's Questions)

Q33 How old was Abraham when Isaac was born?

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Misha was a young Russian boy who was dying. The doctors said they could do nothing more to help him. But Misha wasn't afraid. Before he got sick, his tutor told him about Jesus and how he could be saved. Misha knew he needed to be saved because something inside convicted him of sin. So Misha asked Jesus to wash his sins away and come in to His heart. Misha believed the gospel that Jesus had died for his sins. He trusted in Jesus, and found that his heart was at peace.

Now that he was sick, Misha wanted one more thing. He wanted his mom and dad to also find Jesus. He asked them to promise they would meet him in heaven. They promised. Soon, Misha died. At the grave, his mother and father talked about their promise, and before they went home, they both gave their hearts to Jesus and believed. God responds to people who believe in him. Abraham believed God, and God blessed him. We are blessed, too, when we have faith in God.

Thinking Deeper

In 1948 Richard Weaver wrote a book entitled *Ideas Have Consequences*. Weaver's point is that movements and changes in cultures can be traced to the ideas that captivate the culture. It is true in matters of faith. The idea that we are saved by faith and not by works gave rise to the Reformation. That was a reaction to the idea that the Church held salvation in its hands and could dispense it to those who did the proper works. More recently, the ancient pagan idea that the world and its diverse inhabitants have come from original simple forms has been popularized by Darwin and informs the thinking of most public education. The related idea that the world is self-existing and everything can be explained by naturalistic phenomena has captivated a significant portion of human thinking. That idea is not without consequences. It was at the heart of Marx's dialectical materialism which led to communism's terror and the human ovens of Hitler's National Socialism.

The great Christian idea of righteousness, obtained by faith, opens the door to God's grace and has been a great blessing to the world. We who believe God have the privilege to follow the idea "of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all."