

BIBLE CHARACTER SERIES
SUBJECT: ISAAC
TITLE: A MAN CALLED ISAAC
TEXT: GENESIS, Chapters 21-28

INTRODUCTION

When I was four years old family members tried to prepare me for a new addition to our family. They asked me to guess what it was and I guessed, "A puppy?" No, it wasn't a puppy. I tried a calf, a kitten, or some other animal. Finally, I was told it was a baby brother. His name was, and is James. That was great. That was around the beginning of World War 2. Then, following the war, when I was around 14 years old there was another addition to our family. It was a baby girl, Linda. I loved her from day one, but I didn't any of my classmates I had a brand new baby at home. I was too embarrassed to tell any one that my parents, as old as they were (!), had a new baby at home. Not to worry! I had a female cousin who announced it to everyone, and all the girls had to ask me about my baby sister.

And, if that wasn't bad enough, when I was 16 years old there was another addition to our family. Mike. When he was just an hour or so old I took Linda in to see her new baby brother. I said to my parents and James, "You can have the boy, the girl is mine." Then as Mike began to grow into a charming little toddler, I deserted the family and moved to Mississippi College, and it nearly killed me to have to leave my baby brother behind. When I was at home, he sat in my lap to eat every meal, and thought he was supposed to go with me everywhere I went. When I was home from college he would run into the bedroom James and I shared early the next morning, dive on top of me and begin saying, "Let's box," or "Let's wrestle!" I preached in my home church while I was at Mississippi College and my four year old brother came up and sat by me in the short pew they had for the pastor. I let him sit there until time for me to go to the pulpit and then I leaned down and told him to go back and sit with Mother. He gave me a right hook to the nose and the church had to sing on until I got my nose to stop bleeding.

I learned a little about how much joy the birth of a baby can mean to a family. Then a number of years later, I looked at my own number one son right after he was born and the Lord blessed me with a joy that I cannot describe or explain. Nor, do I need to explain it to anyone who has welcomed his or her infant child into the world. My wife Rebecca took one look at him and decided that he was so handsome and had such a brilliant expression that she insisted on naming him Johnny Lee Sanders II. When you look at your own baby you understand what no one could have explained to you: This is my baby and no matter what you may have thought when you held another baby, this one is yours and, no matter what he looks like, he is perfect for you." I wonder how many cameras I wore out making pictures of John. And then there was Mark. I now had two sons. I got to the hospital the next morning after Mark was born and stopped by the nursery to see him. Then, I went into the room to seem my wife. I asked her, "Where did he get the middle name Keith?" She said, "I don't know. Someone came into the room and asked for his middle name so they could put it on the birth certificate. I have no idea where I got the name, it just popped out of my mouth."

As our sons grew up we had favorite stories we told family members about each of them. I have often explained the difference in them by saying, "John happened to things; things happened to Mark." John's new toys he received at Christmas often lasted until New Year's Day. Mark's still looked the same months later. We celebrated birthdays, holidays, especially Christmas, and took vacations with our son. We love it. We also observed things about them as they were growing up that we would think about years later.

When John was three years old his mother would hold him in worship services. Men in our church would pick at him and at times - like every Sunday - he would begin reacting to them. His mother would get up, pick him up and head back up the long aisle to the foyer. As soon as they began going back up the aisle, John would begin: "Mother, what are we going to do this time? Are you going to spank me, or are we going to have a little talk? Want to talk about it this time? Why don't we just talk about it? Want to talk?" I should have known he was going to be a lawyer someday.

The only time I ever called Mark down in church was when a teen aged girl was talking to him. I called his name and he jumped. He was determined behave, his brother was just determined. But, what does all of this have to do with the man called Isaac? For that matter, what does it have to do with Abraham and Sarah? I am glad you asked. Can you imagine what it was like for them to live to such an old age without ever holding their own baby, without watching him learn to crawl, then walk, and finally to run? The story of Abraham and Sarah make it clear that they missed having a son of their own. For one thing, a son was security for his parents in their old age, but there was more to it than that. We do not have to use much imagination to appreciate just how much they wanted a son. Abraham's brother Haran died, leaving a son named Lot and he was close to his Uncle and Aunt, but they had no son of their own. Any story about Isaac must begin with his miraculous birth, which in so many ways mirrors the miraculous birth of God's own Son, Jesus Christ, who was born to the virgin named Mary. We shall see more about that in a few minutes, but first,

I. LET US LOOK FIRST AT THE LIFE OF THE MAN NAMED ISAAC.

A. First, There Is the Miraculous Birth of Isaac.

1. His birth was promised by the Lord. When Yahweh called Abraham and told him to leave his home in Ur of the Chaldees and go to a distant land, He promised that his descendants would be innumerable:

"The Lord said to Abram: Go out from your land, your relatives, and your father's house to the land that I will show you. (2) I will make you into a great nation, I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. (3) I will bless those who bless you, I will curse those who treat you with contempt, and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (Gen 12:1-3, HCSB)

The Abrahamic Covenant is found in Genesis 15, but most of it is seen in the call of Abraham (Genesis 12) to leave his home and travel to the distant land, we know as The Land of Promise. The Abrahamic Covenant promised (1) a great nation, (2) blessing for Abraham, (3) blessings for

his descendants, and (4) that all nations would be blessed through him (Jesus Christ can bless people of all nations if they will place their faith in Him). Since this was covered in the previous message, A Man Called Abraham, why do we need to consider it here again? In the first place, there is no way Isaac did not grow up listening to his parents discussing the great covenant the Lord made with Abraham. In the second place, there is no way that he would have missed his role in the Lord's covenant. There would never have been a great nation without the birth and the life of Isaac.

Isaac knew his birth was supernatural because both of his parents would have told him that over and over. He didn't grow up watching cartoons on TV, he grew up in and around a great tent which was their home in the land the Lord gave to Abraham and his descendants. He listened as his father taught him about the one God Who created all things. He, no doubt, grew up asking his father questions about God's promise. He grew up with parents who were older than the grandparents of other little boys. He grew up in the home of the one man who knew the purpose and plan of the Lord for the future far better than anyone else in the world. There were definite advantages in growing up in the home of Abraham and Sarah. No one else on earth could have taught him about the covenant or his role in God's plan.

One may wonder how many times he asked his mother Sarah how he got his name. She would have told him that when she overheard the Lord tell Abraham that He would see him again in that place in one year, and he would have a son. Sarah over heard that and laughed. She had never been able to have a child and now she was a withered old woman, well beyond childbearing age. The Lord heard her laugh and even though she denied it, He assured her she did laugh. Thus the name Isaac, which meant laughter.

2. Isaac was born as the Lord had promised.

“The Lord came to Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what He had promised. (2) Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time God had told him. (3) Abraham named his son who was born to him—the one Sarah bore to him—Isaac. (4) When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God had commanded him. (5) Abraham was 100 years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

(6) Sarah said, “God has made me laugh, and everyone who hears will laugh with me.” (7) She also said, “Who would have told Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne a son for him in his old age.” (Gen 21:1-7, HCSB)

3. There is a sad note to this story. God had promised Abraham a son before he left Ur of the Chaldees and even after a number of year there had been no child, and they had been in Canaan 10 years (Gen. 16:3). There is no telling how many times Abraham and Sarah discussed the promised son, but when Sarah was convinced that she would never give birth to a child she suggested to Abraham that he should take her Egyptian servant and have a son by her. He agreed and Hagar the Egyptian slave became pregnant and then she began to treat Sarah with contempt. Now, if this concerns you that the father of the faithful should take Sarah's handmaid and have a baby with her, let me remind you that Abraham had never seen a copy of the Bible, and there

was no Mosaic or rabbinical law at that time. What he did was not uncommon in that day. However, after the baby Ishmael was born his mother Hagar began to mock Sarah.

“Then Sarai said to Abram, “You are responsible for my suffering! I put my slave in your arms, and ever since she saw that she was pregnant, she has treated me with contempt. May the Lord judge between me and you.” (Gen. 16:5)

Abram gave her slave back to her to go with her as she pleased, and Sarah mistreated her, causing Hagar to run away (Gen 16:6).

“(7) The Angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. (8) He said, “Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?”

She replied, “I’m running away from my mistress Sarai.”

(9) Then the Angel of the Lord said to her, “You must go back to your mistress and submit to her mistreatment.” (10) The Angel of the Lord also said to her, “I will greatly multiply your offspring, and they will be too many to count.”

(11) Then the Angel of the Lord said to her: You have conceived and will have a son. You will name him Ishmael, for the Lord has heard your [cry of] affliction. (12) This man will be [like] a wild donkey. His hand will be against everyone, and everyone’s hand will be against him; he will live at odds with all his brothers.” (Gen. 16:7-11)

Hagar gave birth to a son: “Abram was 86 years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him.” (Gen 16:6) Descendants of Ishmael make up a good part of all those in the Middle East, and now in Europe and, Asia, and America who have become a threat to all true believers, spiritual descendants of the Abraham the Father of the Faithful.

Ishmael was 14 years old when Isaac was born, and no doubt his mother had told him about what had happened between her and Sarah to have caused him to be a rather unpleasant youth when Isaac was born. This was a miraculous birth, one that only God could have caused. Isaac’s name means laughter, as we have seen. Can there be any question how he got that name? The Lord Himself had heard Sarah laugh and when He mentioned it she denied it. Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born, and Sarah was 90 years old.

Of course, Isaac was not around for the announcement of his birth to Abraham, but can you imagine the times he heard his parents talk about it? Parents today make photographs and videos of new born babies and then they show them over and over and tell family and friends about every detail that they recall, whether the family and friends want to hear it again or not. I know. I have repeated stories about my sons and my grandchildren to friends and family members, but in my case I know my friends and relatives cannot get enough of it! Abraham and Sarah must have spent many hours reviewing the same stories about the announcement of Isaac’s birth by the Lord. They would have discussed it between themselves, and with their many servants. If only someone had come up with social networking in those days, they would have been sending

pictures back to friends in Ur of the Chaldees. Relatives in Haran would have been showing those videos to neighbors.

Isaac, whose name means “one who laughs”, was the second of three great Hebrew patriarchs to whom all Israelites looked as the progenitor of the Jewish race. He was the only son of Abraham and Sarah, the son of their old age, the miracle child whose birth was but one reminder of another miracle child, the Son of a virgin named Mary. Isaac was born in the south of Canaan, probably in the vicinity of Beer-sheba. The Holman Bible Dictionary notes that: “Isaac was the child of a promise from God, born when Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90 (Gen. 17:17; 21:5). Isaac means “he laughs” and reflects his parents’ unbelieving laughter regarding the promise (Gen. 17:17-19; 18:11-15) as well as their joy in its fulfillment (Gen. 21:1-7)” [HBD]. He was the son of the covenant. He inherited the covenant of the Lord (Gen. 21:6).

Isaac’s life was apparently much quieter than that of his father Abraham or his son Jacob. His life was, as far as we know, much less eventful, with less adventures and fewer dangers. A quiet, simple man, he traveled far less than his father or his son. He was apparently a quiet man, possibly even a timid man. When Isaac was still unmarried at age forty his father decided it was time to help him out a little. I don’t know about you, but I would not want to think of what kind of spouse I would have ended up with if my father had picked her out for me. With all of that, a study of this man of meditation and prayer should be a blessing for anyone.

B. Only a Few Incidents in the Life of Isaac Are Recorded in Genesis.

We do not have a special call recorded as we do in the case of Abraham his father, who was singled out by the Lord when he was well advanced in years and childless, but a highly respected and very successful herdsman in Ur of the Chaldees. According to Dr. Bill Cooper, his research shows that Abraham was well known and highly respected in his home district (The Authenticity of the Book of Genesis).

Isaac may have been well liked or even loved in his community, but we are told nothing about that. What we do know is that Isaac grew up, and for many years lived in the shadow of the most remarkable man in the world at the time. As a matter of fact, some four thousand years Abraham is still known as the father of the faithful. Two thousand years after the call of Abraham the greatest Christian writers, preachers, and teachers in history were writing about Abraham. Jesus, in the story of the rich man and Lazarus, said that the rich man after being cast into hell, saw Lazarus beside Abraham. Jesus discussed Abraham with Jewish leaders in the temple complex (John 8). There are a number of references to Abraham in the Book of Acts. Paul wrote to the Romans: “For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness.” (Rom. 4:3)

Isaac had the privilege of growing up in the home of one of the greatest and most godly men in the history of mankind. Would it not be interesting to see men and women with brilliant minds invest as much time and energy in their quest for righteousness in early man as they do in a search for the missing link, or some indisputable evidence for evolution? Would it not be interesting to see what impact such various individuals as Abraham would have on those of his generation or the following generation. Can you imagine being in the place of Isaac and having

an opportunity to ask questions about the Lord, pray to Him, offering sacrifices with him, enjoying meals with him. He may have even gone fishing with him. I can assure you that Isaac learned from the greatest teacher on earth in his day, and a son will remember a lot more of what his father teaches him when he was growing up than some may imagine.

I asked Timmy, “Do you ever start to do something and pick up a wrench and think about your daddy?” He very sincerely answered, “EV-RY DAY!” I understand, because I am frequently reminded of things my father taught me. If I ever see a book entitled, THINGS MY FATHER TAUGHT ME, and then see that it was written by Franklin Graham, I am going to buy that book because I began listening to Billy Graham when I was twelve or thirteen years old. Isaac would learn by both his father’s words and his examples.

C. God Told Abraham to Offer His Son Isaac to Him on an Altar, 22:1ff.

“After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” “Here I am,” he answered. (2) “Take your son,” He said, “your only [son] Isaac, whom you love, go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.” (Gen 22:1-2)

1. This command must have been mind boggling for Abraham. However, we are told that Abraham obeyed Yahweh without hesitation or argument. When I was in seminary I learned that R. G. Lee was preaching in revival services at Mid City Baptist Church where Paul Driscoll was pastor. I had heard Paul Driscoll speak and I grew up hearing R. G. Lee preach on TV every Sunday after we got home from our services. I had also heard him preach his famous sermon, Pay Day Some Day in person twice. He preached that one sermon over 1200 times. I had heard him preach it in Senatobia, MS one time and then I took my brother James to hear him in Jackson. When my wife Becky and I entered the auditorium at Mid City Baptist Church and chose a place to sit, I looked up above the choir loft and saw the banner with the words: GOD SAID IT, I BELIEVE IT, AND THAT SETTLES IT. I was impressed at the time, but after thinking about those words later on I realized that when God says it, it is settled, whether I believe it or not. However, for it to be settled in my life I must believe it, so that may have been what Pastor Driscoll meant. How many times can you imagine Isaac listening to his father discuss something God had revealed to him and thought, “If God said, I believe it.” And it was settled in his mind.

2. God gave specific instruction, 22:2.

“After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” “Here I am,” he answered. (2) “Take your son,” He said, “your only [son] Isaac, whom you love, go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.” (Gen 22:1-2)

One can only imagine what a shock a command like this would be to almost anyone. The headlines on the front page of The News-Star, a Monroe, Louisiana publication, on August 25, 2014 read, PASTOR’S DAUGHTER DIES ON CHURCH TRIP. The story began, “The 13 year-old daughter of First United Methodist Church, West Monroe was killed Sunday while on a youth trip to Lake Bruin...’ Four young people were shocked while trying to get out of the water.

Apparently, there was an electrical problem that cause them to be shocked when they attempted to climb out of the water on a ladder.

A friend and former roommate had a thirteen year old daughter to get an aspirin from her mother and go back to her room and take it. They later found her dead in her room. The aspirin “went down the wrong way.” A number of years before that I went to the hospital after receiving a call from Emerson Strode. Their four year old son Paul had gone into surgery for a tonsillectomy and they couldn’t “wake him up.” Becky and I walked down the hall to meet Emerson and Martha Strode, wondering what would we would say to these grieving parents? Mr. Strode said it for me: “We asked God for a son and he gave us one, but he didn’t tell us how long we could keep him. We are just going to thank God for the time we had him.” That is amazing, and after all these years I have never forgotten what he said to me that day.

Something like that would have been a shock to Abraham, but he did not discover that his son had died in some accident. The Lord commanded Abraham, “Takeyour only son|Isaac, whom you love, go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.” What would you have done? What did Abraham do? We shall see.

3. Abraham obeyed God explicitly, 22:3ff.

(3)” So Abraham got up early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took with him two of his young men and his son Isaac. He split wood for a burnt offering and set out to go to the place God had told him about. (4) On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. (5) Then Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go over there to worship; then we’ll come back to you.” (6) Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac. In his hand he took the fire and the sacrificial knife, and the two of them walked on together.” (Gen 22:3-6)

God commanded Abraham to do something unimaginable. He told him to sacrifice his son Isaac, the son of promise on Mt. Moriah, which was a rocky outcropping adjacent to the city of Jerusalem, according to the Holman Bible Dictionary. It was in the general vicinity of what would one day be called Mt Calvary. We can only imagine the shock this must have been to Abraham, after waiting so long for the son which the Lord had promised. Now, after waiting for this special miraculous birth and after enjoying the promised son whose descendants, he was promised, would be without number, God now orders him to sacrifice his son Isaac on an altar. What would he do? He would obey the Lord.

Note two things here: (1) Abraham was willing to offer his own precious son to the Lord. (2) Isaac was obedient to his father. Two thousand years later God gave His only begotten Son on a different kind of altar as a sacrifice for you and me. Not only was God willing to give His only begotten Son to die on a different kind of altar, His Son was willing to die on that altar, the cross, for you and me. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16, NKJV)

C. At Mt. Moriah, Abraham Prepared an Altar and Placed Isaac on It, 22:6-10.

(7) Then Isaac spoke to his father Abraham and said, “My father.” And he replied, “Here I am, my son.” Isaac said, “The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

(8) Abraham answered, “God Himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” Then the two of them walked on together.

(9) When they arrived at the place that God had told him about, Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood. He bound his son Isaac and placed him on the altar on top of the wood. 10 Then Abraham reached out and took the knife to slaughter his son.

(11) But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!”

He replied, “Here I am.”

(12) Then He said, “Do not lay a hand on the boy or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your only son from Me.” (13) Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught in the thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it as a burnt offering in place of his son. (14) And Abraham named that place The Lord Will Provide, so today it is said: “It will be provided on the Lord’s mountain.” (Gen. 22:7-14)

1. The Angel of the Lord called to Abraham. One of the great blessings of my life was the privilege of serving on the Board of Trustees for LifeWay Christian Resources, which prints Sunday School literature for over 100,000 churches. I served on the Broadman and Holman Committee, whose ministry it was to publish Bibles and Christian books. In my first meeting as a member of the B & H Committee, our first order of business was to meet with Dr. Ed. Blum, who provided information and answered questions for us about a new translation of the Bible. After having our questions answered we went into executive session and voted to recommend the project to the full board in the upcoming plenary session. It was unanimously approved. Dr. Blum served as General Editor of the Holman Christian Standard Bible. Someone had already been working on that translation for a number of years when we met with Dr. Blum. While meeting with Dr. Blum it became obvious to me that he was a genuine Bible scholar, a Christian gentleman, and obviously a capable translator and editor. We voted to recommend to the full Board that we go forward with this new translation.

Some one hundred translators, who for the first time ever, used both the computer and Internet as tools as they went through the translation process. Any time there was a question about a difficult word or passage, the translators could bring the Hebrew OT or Greek NT up on the computer, go “on-line” and for the first time ever, seek an agreement on the translation of difficult passages and check for consistency (and yes, I know about the Aramaic!). After making this new translation as literal as possible, they then turned to some very gifted writers, like Calvin Miller, and asked them to help smooth it out for better and easier reading. The many characteristics of the Holman Christian Standard Bible includes the use of the Covenant Name for God (Yahweh), and the capitalization of the words “Angel of the Lord” to indicate the translators’ conviction that this title denoted the pre-incarnate Christ.

Now, consider this: the One who would one day hang on a cruel Roman cross and pour out his life's blood to pay for your sins and mine, is the very one who spoke to Abraham here and told him to sacrifice his only son Isaac on an altar on a mount near Jerusalem. Two thousand years later He, the Messiah, would allow Himself to be nailed to "An Old Rugged Cross" on Mount Calvary, just out side of Jerusalem. For two thousand years true believers had a powerful promise of One who would permit Himself to be nailed to that cross and suffer and die for our the sins of the world. And, remember this: Jesus could have freed Himself from that cross - but only if He was willing to see you and me perish.

2. Isaac asked about the sacrifice. From this we may well infer that he had helped his father prepare for sacrifices prior to this. He knew about the altar, the wood, and the fire, all of which they had. But where was the lamb? His father Abraham assured him that God would provide a sacrifice. Bible students are well aware of the Lord's command for Abraham to sacrifice his only son on an altar. Some try to find parallels in every aspect of a story like this. For example, I found that one commentary held that the three day trip to the mount where Abraham was to sacrifice Isaac, was possibly prophetic of the three days Jesus would be in the grave before His Resurrection. While that is an interesting speculation that is about all it is, since we are given no more information on it.

D. The Lord Provided Substitute for the Sacrifice, 22:11-14.

1. The Lord provided a ram for the sacrifice. When Abraham was fully committed to sacrificing Isaac, God intervened.

(15) Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven (16) and said, "By Myself I have sworn," [this is] the Lord's declaration: "Because you have done this thing and have not withheld your only son, (17) I will indeed bless you and make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your offspring will possess the gates of their enemies. (18) And all the nations of the earth will be blessed by your offspring because you have obeyed My command." (Gen 22:15-18)

This passage has provided both a background and prophetic account of one of the most powerful experiences ever given which points to the death of Jesus on the cross. Some sermons point to the love of Abraham for the son he was ordered by The Angel of the Lord to sacrifice, whereas others have stressed the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ, which is illustrated by the Lord's providing a substitute for Isaac on the altar. While both claims are right, there is more: Abraham did not hold back his son, but was in the process of delivering him. At Calvary, God might have held back His only begotten Son to spare Him all that suffering, humiliation, and abuse, but he did not hold Him back. Even when God heard Jesus cry out, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" (Ps. 2:1; Matt. 27:46, Mark 15:34), He did not hold back His Son, but gave Him up to die on the cross for our sins.

2. This speaks of Jesus, who died in our place (Substitutionary Atonement). Both the Old Testament and the New Testament have a lot to say about atonement, and most of us can tell you

a little about Atonement and Substitutionary Atonement. Perhaps the simplest thing I can do here is to share a few notes from the Holman Bible Dictionary on the subject:

“As substitute, Christ acted in our place. Whereas representation emphasizes Christ’s relation to the race, substitution stresses His relation to the individual. He experienced as substitute the suffering and death each person deserved. Substitution is implied in such references as 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 2:24.

In thinking of Christ as substitute, however, His oneness with the Father must be emphasized. Christ is not a third party who comes between God and humanity to absorb all the punishment God can inflict. Substitution means that in Christ, God Himself bears the consequences of human sin. God reconciles people at great cost to Himself.” [Holman Bible Dictionary]

On the cross, Jesus died for us, to pay for our sins. He had none of His own.

3. There is another picture here: God raised up Isaac, as though from the dead. When the Lord saw that Abraham was not going to hold his son back, he stopped him and provided a substitute. In doing so, he permitted Abraham to take his son from the altar. God gave His Son for our sins and our sins would not have been covered - the price would not have been paid for our sins - if the Father had taken His Son off the cross before He paid the ultimate price for our sins. However, on the third day, just as Jesus promised, God raised His Son from the dead. The many appearances Jesus made to His disciples and followers was too convincing for the religious leaders of the day to deny it. It was essential that Jesus die on the cross, but it was also essential that He was raised from the dead after He paid the supreme price for our sins. Paul expressed it this way: “And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins” (1 Cor. 15:17).

Even though we are not told anything about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ in Genesis, this does seem prophetic of His resurrection. The Cross on which Jesus Christ dies testifies to the greatest price ever paid, and the greatest victory ever won for anyone.

4. There are parallels between Isaac and Jesus here. Let us consider a few of the parallels between the experience of Isaac on that stone altar and that of Jesus on the cross two thousand years later. Some who preach on this passage focus on how Abraham must have felt, or what he was thinking when he tied his only son Isaac to that altar. After all, he was the one whom the Lord promised would be the father of a great multitude of descendants. Others try to envision how Abraham must have felt when he drew back that knife as he prepared to plunge it into the heart of his only son. We know that Abraham was fully committed to doing what the Lord commanded him to do. He was not holding back, either because of his love for his son, or the fact that Yahweh had promised that Isaac was the one through whom He would bless the world. At no point had the Lord given Abraham any hint that he would provide a substitute for Isaac. If he had trusted the Lord to bless him with a son, he would continue to trust Him to fulfill His promise.

We talk about how Abraham felt and what he must have been thinking, but how many times do we hear anyone talk about how Isaac must have felt. Young Isaac had no hint that he would be the sacrifice when he was carrying the wood for the sacrifice, or when his father Abraham was building the altar. Not until his father lift him up and placed him on the altar did he have any idea that he was to have been the sacrifice. Can you imagine the thoughts that must have gone through his mind?

His own father was tying him onto the wood which he had laid on the altar!

Isaac had been told ever since he was old enough to understand his parents that his was a miraculous birth, promised by the Lord. He was to have been the father of a great host of people. How could that happen if he died on that altar? He knew nothing of the life and ministry of Jesus, so how would he have known about the resurrection from the dead, or for that matter, what did he know about the substitutionary atonement of Jesus? Was he frightened or did he simply trust his father? We are not told.

Yet, Isaac was there when the Lord provided another sacrifice, a ram caught by its horns in limbs of vines near them. He saw his father take him off the altar and then tie the ram to the altar, slay it, and offer it up to the Lord. It would be interesting to know what Isaac thought about all this during the rest of his long life. He had to see himself being bound to the altar, the knife drawn back, the Lord calling to Abraham, the lamb slain.

Can you not imagine the many times Isaac relived all he had experienced that day? Can you not imagine his telling about this to his own sons, Esau and Jacob? There is a progressive revelation of God's plan for our redemption through His Messiah through the Old Testament. Isaac did not know all of that, but he did know that the Lord had him taken down from that altar, and that He provided a substitute.

We know that God permitted His only begotten Son to die for our sins on Calvary's cross. We also know that the Lord raised His only begotten Son from death. If we truly believe in Him we receive everlasting life.

E. Isaac lived his early life in the shadow Abraham (Genesis 12-20).

1. Abraham was one of the greatest men in history. Isaac sat at his feet and there can be no doubt that his father explained the Covenant to him many times. There also can be not doubt that the two of them spoke regularly about the time his father laid him on the altar he had built on Mt. Moriah and, following the specific instructions of the Lord, tied him over the wood he had carried up the side of Mt. Moriah to the place where his father built the altar as the Lord had commanded. Isaac must have told his father what he was thinking when his father tied him on the altar and drew the knife back and started to bring it down in order to sacrifice his son on that rugged altar. He was looking his father in the eye when he drew back the knife to take the life of his promised son, the son of that miraculous birth.

There is no doubt that both Abraham and his son Isaac spoke many time of that they were thinking when they suddenly heard that unforgettable voice when "the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And Abraham answered, "Here I am." (Gen

22:10-11) The Angel of the Lord then provided Abraham with a sacrifice. During a heated debate with religious leaders, two thousand years later, “Jesus said to them, “ I assure you: Before Abraham was, I am.” (John 8:58) Jesus was well aware of what was taking place on that ancient altar.

2. He would have know about the covenant God made with his father.

“The Lord said to Abram: Go out from your land, your relatives, and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will (1) make you into a great nation, I will (2) bless you, I will (3) make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will (4) bless those who bless you, I will curse those who treat you with contempt, and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Gen 12:1-3, HCSB).

The Lord promised Abraham a land and descendants to fill that land. He promised to bless Abraham and his descendants. He promised to make his name great. He changed his name from Abram (exalted father) to Abraham (father of a multitude). He promised, “all people on earth will be blessed through you.” That promise is Messianic. We are not just looking at religious superstitions and fables here. This covenant is deeply rooted in the history of the world. We are talking about deep roots and sweet fruits! But, let’s get back to Isaac.

Isaac played an essential role in that covenant. In the first place, Yahweh promised Abraham a son, and beyond that, more descendants than anyone could number. Abraham would have many other descendants: Ishmael, the son of Sarah’s hand maid. Hagar, and he six sons born to him from his union with Keturah. However, not one of those sons would fulfill he covenant God made with Abraham. Only Isaac could do that.

F. Let Us Summarize the Life of Isaac.

1. Isaac’s life was not filled with adventure, as was his father.

- a. There were no major skirmishes with other tribes.
- b. There were no major conflicts within his family until near the end of his life.
- c. He and Ishmael buried Abraham together (Genesis 25).

2. Isaac seems not to have been as strong and aggressive as Abraham or Jacob.

3. He was a man of quiet nature and habits.

4. When Sarah died, he was 36 years old, and he grieved a long time.

5. He was 40 years old when he married Rebekkah.

6. His twin sons were born when he was 60 years old.

7. Isaac was quiet, peaceful, meditative, and prayerful.

8. He was a successful farmer and herdsman.

9. Of the first three patriarchs, Isaac was the only one with only one wife.

G. Isaac Lived His Life in the Shadow of One of History’s Great Men.

“His life was an echo of the life of Abraham - all its vibrations arise from the powerful influences given in the life of Abraham” (Source unknown).

1. Isaac was educated at the feet of “the father of the faithful.”
2. It was the child Isaac whom the Lord commanded Abram to sacrifice (Gen. 22).
3. That story reveals the faith of Abraham, but hints at the faith of Isaac.
 - a. Little has been said of the faith, obedience, and submission of Isaac.
 - b. The child Isaac might have escaped from his aged father.
 - c. He permitted himself to be bound to that altar.
 - d. Isaac became a “type” of Christ.

- 1) Jesus was obedient to His heavenly Father.
- 2) Jesus permitted Himself to be nailed to the cross for our sins.
- 3) Jesus was raised from the dead, as Isaac was raised from that altar.

II. ABRAHAM ARRANGED THE MARRIAGE BETWEEN ISAAC AND REBEKAH (GEN. 24).

A. Abraham Sent a Servant to Find a Wife for Isaac from Among His People in Haran.

1. The servant pledged to do what Abraham asked. The Scripture tells us that “Abraham was now old, getting on in years, and the Lord had blessed him in everything.” (24:1). He had been 100 years old when Isaac was born and now Isaac was 40 years old. He was, indeed, “getting on in years.”

2. Abraham ordered his trusted servant to find Isaac a wife among his own people (24:2ff). He asked the servant to swear that he would find Isaac a wife among his relatives in Haran, and never from the people of Canaan. Abraham said to him, “go to my land and my family to take a wife for my son Isaac.” (24:4)

3. The servant asked specific questions and Abraham gave him his instructions. (1) He must find him a wife from his relatives in Haran, a place named for Abraham’s brother. (2) He must not find Isaac a wife from among the pagan Canaanites, and (3) he must not take Isaac back to Haran (24:6).

The Lord has promised the land of Canaan to the descendants of Isaac and that would not happen if he moved back to Haran.

4. Abraham said God would send His angel before the servant to find a wife for Isaac (24:7). The Lord left nothing to chance. We shall see that He did send an angel before the servant to prepare the heart of a young maiden for his visit (24:7).

5. The servant obeyed and prayed for guidance.

(24:10) The servant took 10 of his master’s camels and departed with all kinds of his master’s goods in hand. Then he set out for Nahor’s town Aram-naharaim. (11) He made the camels kneel

beside a well of water outside the town at evening. [This was] the time when the women went out to draw water.

(12) “Lord, God of my master Abraham,” he prayed, “give me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. 13 I am standing here at the spring where the daughters of the men of the town are coming out to draw water. 14 Let the girl to whom I say, ‘Please lower your water jug so that I may drink,’ and who responds, ‘Drink, and I’ll water your camels also’—let her be the one You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. By this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master.”

6. The Lord answered his prayer.

(15) Before he had finished speaking, there was Rebekah—daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, the wife of Abraham’s brother Nahor—coming with a jug on her shoulder. (16) Now the girl was very beautiful, a young woman who had not known a man intimately. She went down to the spring, filled her jug, and came up. (17) Then the servant ran to meet her and said, “Please let me have a little water from your jug.”

(18) She replied, “Drink, my lord.” She quickly lowered her jug to her hand and gave him a drink. (19) When she had finished giving him a drink, she said, “I’ll also draw water for your camels until they have had enough to drink.” (20) She quickly emptied her jug into the trough and hurried to the well again to draw water. She drew water for all his camels (21) while the man silently watched her to see whether or not the Lord had made his journey a success.

(22) After the camels had finished drinking, the man took a gold ring weighing half a shekel, and for her wrists two bracelets weighing 10 shekels of gold. (23) “Whose daughter are you?” he asked. “Please tell me, is there room in your father’s house for us to spend the night?”

(24) She answered him, “I am the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor.” (25) She also said to him, “We have plenty of straw and feed and a place to spend the night.”

(26) Then the man bowed down, worshiped the Lord, (27) and said, “Praise the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has not withheld His kindness and faithfulness from my master. As for me, the Lord has led me on the journey to the house of my master’s relatives.”

7. Rebekah revealed the visit to her family (24:28ff). Rebekah led Abraham’s servant to her father Bethuel and her brother Laban and introduced him to them and then told them about their meeting and the reason for the man’s visit. They listened to all she had to say and then Laban questioned Abraham’s servant. After that, they concluded that this was of the Lord:

(24:50) Laban and Bethuel answered, “This is from the Lord; we have no choice in the matter. 51 Rebekah is here in front of you. Take [her] and go, and let her be a wife for your master’s son, just as the Lord has spoken.”

8. Rebekah agreed to go with the servant and become a wife to Isaac. Rebekah’s father and brother asked he, “Will you go with this man?” She replied, “I will go.” (Vs.58).

(59) So they sent away their sister Rebekah with the one who had nursed and raised her, and Abraham's servant and his men. (60) They blessed Rebekah, saying to her: Our sister, may you become thousands upon ten thousands. May your offspring possess the gates of their enemies." Little did they realize, or could they know, that four thousand years later six million of her descendants would be standing off 300 millions Muslims who have sworn to destroy all Jews.

B. Isaac married Rebekah and found comfort after the death of his mother, Sarah.

1. Isaac had grieved for Sarah for some time after her death. In genesis 23:1f, we read, "Now Sarah lived 127 years ; [these were all] the years of her life. (2) Sarah died in Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham went to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her." It is obvious that Isaac also grieved for Sarah.

Sarah was 90 years old when Isaac was born (Gen. 23:1ff) and Isaac knew her for 37 years. Sarah died and Abraham purchased the cave of Machpelah and the field associated with it from the owner, Ephron the Hittite, and buried Sarah there. Ephron offered to give the field and cave to Abraham but he asked that he be permitted to pay for it. Isaac grieved for his mother for some time and he probably visited the burial place many times. He was still grieving when the servant showed up with Rebekah.

2. Isaac and Rebekah met according to the Lord's arrangement.

(62) Now Isaac was returning from Beer-lahai-roi, for he was living in the Negev region. (63) In the early evening Isaac went out to walk in the field, and looking up he saw camels coming. (64) Rebekah looked up, and when she saw Isaac, she got down from her camel (65) and asked the servant, "Who is that man in the field coming to meet us?"

"The servant answered, "It is my master." So she took her veil and covered herself. (66) The servant told Isaac everything he had done. (67) And Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah and took Rebekah to be his wife. Isaac loved her, and he was comforted after his mother's [death]." (Gen 24:1-67)

The darkest day in his life must have been when his mother Sarah died, and the brightest day in his life may well have been when he looked up and saw Rebekah coming toward him. It is significant that we are told that Isaac was comforted after his mother's death, and that which brought comfort to him was his new wife, Rebekah. This certainly implies a close relationship to his mother. Sadly, many sons today neglect their mother.

My father had a series of heart attacks and strokes and his health problems paralleled my mother's lengthy battle following surgery to remove a tumor in which the roots had gone deep into her brain. The surgeon told me that the longest any of his patients with roots from the tumor going that deep into the brain was eight months. We had my mother eight years, and during that time I drove from Northeast Louisiana to northwest Mississippi, to a hospital in Memphis, or a

nursing home in Sardis, Mississippi one day a week for eight years, never taking a vacation or a day off except to visit my mother and father. I never went fishing or hunting during that time. I never took personal trips of any duration during that time. I did take trips to attend meetings of the Executive Board of the Louisiana Baptist Convention and the Board of Trustees meetings for LifeWay Christian Resources.

There were a few times when I had to drive to a hospital in Memphis twice during a week. If he was out of school my son John traveled with me. Because of an injury I had to use a wheel chair to get into the big hospitals. My only regret was that I could not have been there more often for both parents. One great blessing was that I had the full support of my wife and sons - and the appreciation of my church. Men, if your parents are battling health problems, just seeing you will make a lot of difference - and if you take a grandchild along with you that will make your visit very special. I know from experience. Nothing brought more joy to my mother's face than to look up and see one of my sons enter the room with me.

III. ISAAC LOVED TO SIT ALONE AT DUSK AND TALK TO YAHWEH.

A. The Lord Reaffirmed His Promise to Isaac, Genesis 2:1-6.

(1) "There was [another] famine in the land in addition to the one that had occurred in Abraham's time. And Isaac went to Abimelech, king of the Philistines, at Gerar. (2) The Lord appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt. Live in the land that I tell you about; (3) stay in this land as a foreigner, and I will be with you and bless you. For I will give all these lands to you and your offspring, and I will confirm the oath that I swore to your father Abraham. (4) I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky, I will give your offspring all these lands, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed by your offspring, (5) because Abraham listened to My voice and kept My mandate, My commands, My statutes, and My instructions." (6) So Isaac settled in Gerar." (Bold added by JLS)

The Lord here reaffirms the Abrahamic Covenant. It did not die with Abraham, but continued through his son Isaac, and the other patriarchs and descendants following the age of the patriarchs. One thousand years later Yahweh would enter a covenant with King David (2 Samuel 7) in which we see the promise of the Messiah. This underscores the progressive revelation of the Lord's plan for a Redeemer who would come and replace rituals, sacrifices, and offerings, just as it canceled the need for an earthly priesthood or even the Holy of Holies. What earthly priests, who served according to Yahweh's purpose, did from generation to generation, Jesus accomplished once for all time at Calvary, and when Jesus died on the cross the veil between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place was split down the middle, from top to bottom. The writer of Hebrews states this very clearly:

"In the same way, the Messiah did not exalt Himself to become a high priest, but the One who said to Him, You are My Son; today I have become Your Father, (6) also said in another passage, You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek." (Heb 5:5-6, HCSB)

“Now the main point of what is being said is this: we have this kind of high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, (2) a minister of the sanctuary and the true tabernacle, which the Lord set up, and not man.” (Heb 8:1-2)

Reading the Scripture from Hebrews 8 - 9, we see that the high priesthood of Jesus is far superior to that of an earthly high priest. The earthly high priest had to enter the Most Holy Place once each year with the blood of a sacrifice to make atonement for himself and for the people. Jesus only made atonement for us, since He had never sinned.

Abraham set an example for all those who would follow him: “Abraham listened to My voice and kept My mandate, My commands, My statutes, and My instructions.” Is there any wonder that, even after four thousand years, Abraham is still remembered as The Father of the Faithful? We can only imagine what it was like Isaac to grow up in the presence of his father, whose life set the standard for righteous people from that time until the coming of the Messiah.

B. He Had His Faults and Failures, As in His Lie to Abimelech (Gen. 26).

Isaac was forced to move into a new area because of another famine, like the one Abraham found when he first came into the land. When he saw that there was a famine in the land he went down to Egypt. Do you remember Abraham’s telling the people of Egypt that Sarah was his sister rather than his wife? In truth, she was his half sister, but he used that relationship to protect him from the Pharaoh. Someone told Pharaoh about this beautiful woman who came down to Egypt in the company of a man from another country. Abraham could truthfully say that Sarah was his sister, but he was hiding the fact that she was also his wife. The truth was revealed to Pharaoh and he sent Abraham away with his great wealth and blessings. Isaac must have known that, yet under similar circumstances, he told the same lie to the king of the Philistines .

(7) “When the men of the place asked about his wife, he said, “She is my sister,” for he was afraid to say “my wife,” [thinking,] “The men of the place will kill me on account of Rebekah, for she is a beautiful woman.” (8) When Isaac had been there for some time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked down from the window and was surprised to see Isaac caressing his wife Rebekah

(9) Abimelech sent for Isaac and said, “So she is really your wife! How could you say, ‘She is my sister’?” Isaac answered him, “Because I thought I might die on account of her.”

(10) Then Abimelech said, “What is this you’ve done to us? One of the people could easily have slept with your wife, and you would have brought guilt on us.” (11) So Abimelech warned all the people with these words: “Whoever harms this man or his wife will certainly die.” (Gen 26:1-11)

C. He Was also an Example of Great Man Who Failed as a Father.

1. Partiality shown by Isaac and Rebekah was the root of serious family trouble.
2. Isaac favored Esau, the hunter who brought him fresh venison.
3. Rebekah favored Jacob and helped him deceive his father and his brother (Gen. 27).
4. Rebekah helped Jacob cheat Esau out of his birth right.

5. Grief came to the parents when Jacob was forced to flee the wrath of Esau.
6. Jacob never saw his beloved mother again.

D. We May Glean Something of the Character of Isaac from Genesis.

1. Mention is made of his submission to God (Ch. 22).
2. That he was a man of meditation is suggested in Gen. 24:63.
3. His deep devotion to the Lord is revealed in the Bible.
4. Isaac was a man of peace who avoided conflict whenever possible (Gen. 26:20ff).
5. He worshiped the Lord (Gen. 26:25).
6. His adoration and reverent fear of God is revealed in Gen. 31:42-53).

E. We May Learn from Isaac's Love of the Lord, and His Failures in His Home.

1. Because of his submission to God he fulfilled his place in God's plan for mankind.
2. He fulfilled his purpose in the great Abrahamic Covenant.
3. We should also be warned that parental partiality can bring grief to the family.

CONCLUSION. The hope of mankind was given in the Covenant the Lord made with Abraham and continued through Isaac, and then Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel. Neither Abraham nor Isaac was perfect, but God's Covenant is perfect. Isaac was a godly man who served the Lord, but a man who let favoritism in his own home set in motion hatred, bitterness, strife, and wars. Today, even after four thousand years, the animosity still rages, and that rage can be traced back to Ishmael and other children of Abraham by Keturah, and to Esau. If we recognize the failures, the sins of those great patriarchs surely we will acknowledge the fact that we have failed the Lord. Lost people are already under a sentence of eternal death and separation from God. True believers continually sin and "come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). No sin is without consequences. Unforgiven sin will have a devastating effect on you, your family, and your friends, often for generations.

The hope of the world today is in Jesus Christ, who fulfilled the Covenant God made with Abraham. With His death on the Cross Jesus instituted a new covenant, written in His blood, for you and me. Our Creator protected His Covenant and kept it alive until the time when it would be fulfilled in His only begotten Son. Jesus has given us a new covenant which is an expression of God's love for you and me (John 3:16). Because of His love for the one creation created in His image, He has provided for the salvation of any person who will come to Him through His Son Jesus: "But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us!" (Romans 5:8, HCSB).

Someone has said, the New Testament deals with two things: (1) how to be saved, and (2) how the saved are to live. At first, I bought into that, and then I took another look. The most compelling and amazing thing about the New Testament is what it reveals about our Creator: His attributes, character, power, presence, wisdom, and the permission to call Him "our heavenly Father." Within this context, the New Testament does indeed focus on how we are saved, and

how we are to live. It also underscores the great joy available to those who both trust Him and obey Him.

There are no perfect people, there is only a perfect God. Isaac was not perfect. He was a godly man, a man of prayer and meditation, yet he sowed the seeds of favoritism within his family and the harvest of that favoritism has been harsh, bitter, and bloody. One son, Jacob, who was favored by Rebekah, was spoiled, selfish, and deceitful. The other son, Esau, favored by Esau, left for his descendants a legacy of intense hatred, strife, and war.

Abraham was not perfect and Isaac had his flaws. So it is, even with the greatest of men. David was a man after God's own heart, yet he committed unbelievable sins. Samuel saw how Eli spoiled his sons, and should have learned from the way they corrupted worship, but instead, he watched his own sons become corrupt worship leaders. Solomon may have been the wisest man in the world, but he made a complete fool of himself over strange women. Paul has often been considered the greatest Christian who ever lived, yet he would see himself as a miserable sinner.

Now, I want to speak to those of you who are in church every Sunday, those who are in services "every time the doors are opened." Paul confessed that he did not do the things he wanted to do - and he did the things he did not want to do. You and I know how the Lord expects us to live. If you know that you have failed to honor the Lord with your whole heart there could be no better time to ask His forgiveness than right now. He will fill your heart with His Holy Spirit to guide you and empower you to be the person he wants you to be.