

**GROUNDS OF FAITH CAFÉ: “Genesis” (Subtitled: Is there a snake in your Garden too?) Further subtitled: Lessons from the Garden! Lesson 17. (Gen 22:1-24). For lesson copies, go to <http://www.montgomerychurch.org/resources8.html>**

Overview: The two stories involving Abraham’s Egyptian maid Hagar in chapters 16 and 21 lead into the pivotal chapter that we will study today. Part of the picture from these earlier chapters seems to be that one needs to really “see” God for who He is so that we can see the “reality” of His blessings even when we are in dire straits. We recall God “heard” (paid heed) to Hagar’s affliction, but He tells her to return to Sarai in submission (16:9). Later, God “heard” the voice of Ishmael (21:17). In both instances, God “appears” in response to the cries of despair. Hagar recognizes a powerful aspect of who God is. She declares He is “*El-Roi*,” “God of my seeing,” and then adds: “*Truly here I have seen Him who looks after me.*” (16:13). After that, *El-Roi*, the God who looks after her “*opened her eyes*” to see the well that was there all the time (21:19). It is no accident that these stories provide a framework for the event we are about to consider.

**Read 22:1-24 completely through:** Remember that the event you are about to discuss comes shortly after Abraham has banished Hagar and his firstborn son *Ishmael* (“God hears”) to the wilderness (21:14-21). In that picture, we read that Abraham *placed* bread and water on Hagar’s back and sent her and his son to the desert (21:14). In this chapter, Abraham *places* the sacrificial wood on Isaac’s back and departs for the mountain (22:6). Watch for two tremendously powerful themes permeating this chapter: *Divine testing and Divine Providing*. Remember the themes are set in the framework developed above: the God of “seeing” who looks after His people and “opens their eyes” to His deliverance. Watch also for a powerful literary linkage between chapters 22 and 12. These 2 chapters give the first and last times God speaks to Abraham!

- **Re-read 22:1-3.** Now re-read 12:1-8. In both accounts, God tells Abraham to “go forth...”. What does God ask Abraham to do in both accounts and what are Abraham’s responses? What interim lesson do you draw for yourselves at this point? Discuss.
- **Re-read 22:1-16.** This passage confronts us directly with the key themes: *Divine Testing & Divine Providing*. That is the ultimate lesson to be drawn. But as you read the verses, note the language Scripture chooses to develop 4 extremely descriptive images:
  - (1) “Isaac” is described as what type of son in 22:2, 12, 16? What comes to mind with regard to God and Christ as you read? Discuss.
  - (2) Abraham gives 2 verbal responses to God in 22:1, 11 and one expanded answer to his son in 22:7. What significance to you attach to these responses if any? Discuss.
  - (3) In 22:5, we encounter the first use of the word “*worship*” in Scripture. Abraham has repeatedly built altars to physically acknowledge his commitment to God’s Divine call before. In 22:6-9, Abraham is asked by God to construct the ultimate altar and offer a “burnt offering.” This is reminiscent of the scene from Genesis 8:20-21. As Noah emerged from the ark, he built an altar to the LORD and offered “burnt offerings” on the altar. This foretold later categories of sacrifices, all intended as sacrifices **in** communion with God (burnt offerings and peace offerings), or **for** communion with God, i.e., to restore that communion when it had been disturbed or dimmed through sin and trespass (sin and trespass offerings). Two principles of “sacrifice” are: (A) the sacrifice must be of such things as had belonged to the offerer as nothing else could represent him or take his place before God, and (B) the death of the sacrifice was only a means towards an end, that end being the shedding and sprinkling of the blood – the substitutionary life – by which atonement was really made. The “burnt offering” symbolized the entire surrender unto God, whether of the individual or later the congregation, and His acceptance thereof. In effect, it became a sacrifice of devotion or service. The sacrificed animal or bird was always to be male, perhaps indicating strength and energy. Later, in Old Covenant times, it was the only sacrifice which non-Israelites were allowed to bring. What lesson do you draw from this imagery with the idea of giving “worship” to God? Discuss.
  - (4) Finally, we see that “sight” plays a significant role. Abraham’s “sight” is mentioned in verses 4, 13. God’s sight is acknowledged in the term “*Yahweh Yireh – the LORD will provide*” as the Hebrew plays on the word for “sight” (*ra’ah*) meaning that when God “provides,” the LORD *has literally seen to the offering*. Like Hagar, Abraham places his trust in God’s seeing. What do you learn regarding “faith” from these verses? Discuss.
- **Re-read 22:11-19.** God speaks His final words to Abraham in 2 instances. What lessons do you draw from God’s Words to Abraham that apply to you? Discuss. Finally, have you been in situations when your faith was not only tested but also when God provided? Discuss.