

THE QUESTION OF THE WEEK

“God put Abraham to the test. ‘Abraham’ ‘Here I am.’ ‘Take your son Isaac, whom you love and go to the land of Moriah. There you shall offer him up as a holocaust.’”

Genesis 22: 1-2.

This has always been one of the most difficult passages for me in all of the Scriptures. God telling Abraham to prepare to sacrifice his son as a holocaust before God. I try to bear in mind that the story comes from a time about 1800 years BC and I think of how primitive were those times and how common infant sacrifice was among many ancient peoples. But still, it presents a cruel dilemma. It presents God as a jealous God who wants to make sure that Abraham is more obedient to him than he is caring for his own son.

It took me a long time to realize that this story, as ancient as it is, is actually pointing into the future. It points to another hill not very far at all from Mount Moriah (which is the site of the present Rock of Omar on the site of the ancient Temple of Jerusalem). It was pointing way into the future to another Mount, called Golgotha on which another Son would be offered up in sacrifice, the only begotten Son of the very God of Abraham.

The Father never intended Abraham to sacrifice his son. He did intend to put Abraham to the test. And Abraham endured the test and was willing to do whatever the Lord asked even if it made no sense and seemed barbaric to him. Such was Abraham’s faith and his trust in the living God. Isaac is saved and a ram is sacrificed instead, the original lamb. On Calvary the other son will be sacrificed as the true holocaust by the Father’s request and out of total trust and obedience. All of this makes no sense to us hearing with twenty-first century ears. Unless, of course, we remember that this life is not all there is. There is a kingdom that awaits us, to which we are invited, A kingdom where truth reigns and justice is the order of the day. What Jesus does on Calvary’s heights is the completion of what the father began almost two millennia before. Trust God despite what is going on. Can we dare to do that? That is the question of the week.