

## Hebrews Bible Study- Year 2

### Lesson 12 Notes/ Hebrews 11:17-19

#### Abraham: Faith Proven Through Testing

In this week's lesson, the author continues his discussion on faith, further highlighting the faith of Abraham by noting the most significant test in the patriarch's life: the sacrifice of Isaac, the promised seed. Through this episode, believers can learn much about God, and the design He has for trials. They can be assured that regardless of how difficult their temporal circumstances may be the promises of God can never fail them.

The author states in Hebrews 11:17-19, **"By faith, Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, 'Through Isaac shall your offspring be named. He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which figuratively speaking, he did receive him back."** While there is much that can be said about the account being referenced, a primary truth that should first be observed is this: God, in His love, tests His children.

Genesis 22:1-19 records the episode being referenced and clearly states in vs 1 that **"God tested Abraham and said to him, 'Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' He said, 'Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.'"** The Greek word for testing used is *peirazo* which means to test for the purpose of proving one's character or the genuineness of faith. The Scriptures are full of references, other than the one discussed here, which demonstrate that God sovereignly allows testing to prove what is in man's heart. (Ex. 15:25, 16:4, 20:20, Deut. 8:16, 13:3, Judges 3:1-4, 2 Chron. 32:31, Dan. 1:12-14, Job 1, James 1:12-14, 1 Peter 1:3-7) Clearly, throughout the Old and New Testaments testing is a recurring theme. Additionally, it is important to remember that the testing which God allows is always done in love. In fact, as we will study more deeply in Hebrews 12, God's discipline of us is a way that He proves we are His child.

#### Background on Abraham

As we know, the testing that occurred with Abraham on Mount Moriah was set within a broader biblical context. The event itself happened in the latter part of the patriarch's life, after he had experienced many encounters with the Lord. As a review, we must keep in mind how significant the covenant promises God had made with Abraham were. As Hollman's Bible Handbook states,

"The story of the patriarchs is centered and grounded in the covenant to which the Lord called Abraham. This history of the human race from the fall to Abraham's own day was sufficient to show that the great kingdom purposes of God could not be achieved until humanity could be redeemed and restored to covenant-keeping capacity. The promise had been given that the offspring of the woman would someday prevail over anti-God forces. Now that offspring promise was to find fulfillment in one man and his descendants, chief among whom was to be the Messiah who would effect salvation and dominion."

At the point in Abraham's life when he was told to sacrifice Isaac, God had already made clear to him that His covenant promises would indeed flow through Isaac, and not Ishmael, his son by Hagar. This is what made God's command all the more peculiar. Yet Abraham had learned that God was a covenant keeping God and could be trusted. He had learned that God's Word was reliable and unchangeable. That is why he was able to say to Isaac when he asked him where the lamb was, **"God will provide from Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son."** (Gen. 22:8) He clearly understood God's immutability of which MacArthur remarks,

"God is reliable and immutable. He does not change; therefore, His Word always comes to pass. God's promises are certain, and they are punctual. They will be fulfilled in exactly the way and at exactly the time that the Lord has determined and declared. Others cannot thwart God's promises and He Himself will not break them. In every form and in every degree, His Word is immutable."

Abraham's faith was grounded in the perfect character of God which guaranteed the promises of God, and this was the only reason he could place his son on the altar knowing that

God would somehow act. Simply put, his obedience demonstrated the sincerity and maturity of his faith. As the ESV study Bible explains,

“Abraham’s action confirms his faithful obedience to God. Abraham’s faith which was the earlier means by which God counted him as righteous, (15:6), that faith is now ‘active along with his works,’ and that faith is ‘completed by his works’ (James 2:21-23), so his faith resulted in obedience, which is its expected outcome.”

Interestingly, as was referenced earlier,

“The word ‘tried’ (used in Hebrews 11:17) is the translation of *peirazo* which means ‘to put to the test.’ Here it refers to the act of God putting Abraham to the test in order to prove his character and the steadfastness of his faith. The construction in the Greek makes it clear that while the testing of Abraham was still in progress, he had already offered up his son, that is, before the trial had come to an issue by his obedient will, through faith in God. Abraham met the test through faith before there was any visible evidence of God’s intervening hand. Abraham fully expected God to raise his body from the dead out of the ashes of the burnt sacrifice. He reasoned that since God promised him a line of ancestry through Isaac, He would do that. And he had faith to believe that God would do so. Vincent explains the words ‘**Also he received him as a figure,**’ as follows: ‘Since the sacrifice did not take place as a literal slaughter there could be not a literal restoration from death. There was a real offering in Abraham’s will, but not a real death of Isaac. Isaac’s death took place symbolically, in the sacrifice of the ram: correspondingly, the restoration was only a symbolic restoration from the dead.’ (Wuest)

Clearly, we can see through this episode, and the whole of Abraham’s life, that he was **“not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.” (Hebrews 10:39)** That is why in Hebrews, and in many other places in Scripture, Abraham is set forward as an example for believers to imitate, and even called the father of our faith (Romans 4:16).

### **Faith Application**

The event which took place with Abraham and Isaac, on Mount Moriah in Genesis 22 has many applications for us today. Macarthur speaks of this in his commentary on Hebrews when he writes,

“If Noah illustrates the duration of faith, Abraham shows the depth of faith. In tremendous, monumental faith Abraham brought Isaac to the top of Mount Moriah and prepared to offer him to God. He believed in resurrection from the dead even before God revealed the doctrine. He had to believe in resurrection, because if God allowed him to carry out the command to sacrifice Isaac, resurrection was the only way God could keep His promise.

As it turns out, because he did not actually die, Isaac became only a type of the resurrection. He was offered but he was not slain. God provided a substitute. It was the fact that Abraham offered up Isaac that proved his faith. The final standard of faith, its real proof, is willingness to sacrifice. ‘If anyone wished to come after Me’ (Matt. 16:24). “I urge you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.’ (Rom. 12:1)

When John Bunyan was in jail for preaching the gospel, he was deeply concerned about his family. He was particularly grieved about his little blind daughter, for whom he had a special love. He wrote, ‘I saw in this condition I was a man who was pulling down his house upon the head of his wife and children. Yet, thought I, I must do it; I must do it. The dearest idol I have known, what err that idol be, help me to tear it from Thy throne and worship only Thee.’

The patriarchs, therefore, held to the five great standards of faith; its pilgrimage, in separation from the world; its patience, in waiting for God to work; its power, in doing the impossible; its positiveness, in focusing on God’s eternal promise; and its proof, in obedient sacrifice.”

All the patriarchs, along with every faithful believer who has lived ever since, prove out the famous words written by the apostle in I Peter 1:3-9 about faith and testing,

**“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary you have been grieved with various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith- more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire-may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen Him, you love him. Though you do not now see Him, you love Him. Though you do not now see Him, you believe in Him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.” (ESV)**

#### References

ESV Study Bible

Hebrews Tyndale New Testament Commentaries by Donald Guthrie

Hebrews Macarthur Commentary

The Message of Hebrews Raymond Brown

Hollman Bible Handbook

Word Studies in the Greek New Testament Volume II Kenneth S. Wuest

## "What is the significance of Mount Moriah in the Bible?"

**Answer:** Mount Moriah in Old City Jerusalem is the site of numerous biblical acts of faith. It is also one of the most valuable pieces of real estate and one of the most hotly contested pieces of real estate on earth. This is a profoundly sacred area to Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Sitting atop Mount Moriah today is the Temple Mount, a 37-acre tract of land where the Jewish temple once stood. Several important Islamic holy sites are there now, including the Dome of the Rock – a Muslim shrine built thirteen hundred years ago – and the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Mount Moriah's history begins in Genesis. In the twenty-second chapter, God commands Abraham, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains which I will tell you" ([Genesis 22:2](#)). The place God led Abraham was Mount Moriah. Abraham didn't fully understand what God was asking him to do in light of God's previous promise to establish an everlasting covenant with Isaac ([Genesis 17:19](#)); nonetheless, he trusted God and by faith offered Isaac as a sacrifice. Of course, God intervened and spared Isaac's life by providing a ram instead. Abraham thereafter called this place "The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, 'On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided'" ([Genesis 22:14](#)). Because of Abraham's obedience on Mount Moriah, God told Abraham that his "descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed because you have obeyed me" (vv. 17, 18).

About a thousand years later at this very location, King David bought the threshing floor of [Araunah the Jebusite](#) and built an altar to the Lord so that a "plague may be held back from the people" ([2 Samuel 24:18, 21](#)). After David's death, his son King Solomon built a glorious temple on the same site. Solomon's temple lasted for over four hundred years until it was destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar's armies in 587/586 B.C.

Seventy years later the temple was rebuilt on the same site by the Jews who returned to

Jerusalem following their Babylon captivity. Around the first century, King Herod made a significant addition to this structure, which then became known as Herod's Temple. It was this temple that Jesus cleansed ([John 2:15](#)).

However, in A.D. 70, the Roman armies led by Titus, son of the Emperor Vespasian, once again destroyed the temple. All that remains of the Temple Mount of that era is a portion of a retaining wall known as the "Western Wall" or the "Wailing Wall." It has been a destination for pilgrims and a site of prayer for Jews for many centuries.

The God who first called Abraham to Mount Moriah still has plans for that place. The Bible indicates that a third temple will be built on or near the site of Solomon's temple ([Daniel 9:27](#)). This would seem to present a problem given the political obstacles that stand in the way: the religious activities on the Temple Mount are currently controlled by the Supreme Muslim Council (the Waqf). Yet nothing can put a wrinkle in God's sovereign plans. Thus, Muslim control of this area simply fulfills the prophecy of [Luke 21:24](#) that "Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

From Got Questions