

Exploring the Nature of God (God, Our Provider)

Introduction:

- I. We are currently engaged in a study entitled, *“Exploring the Nature of God.”* In doing so we have examined a few names God is called by in the Bible. In Genesis one God is called Elohim, a term that points to the greatness and glory of God and contains the idea of creative power and omnipotent sovereignty. Thus, we spoke of “God, Our Creator.” In Genesis two, another name of God is introduced, that being the name Yahweh. Yahweh, according to Ex. 3:15 is God’s personal name and it points, not only to the eternal nature of God, meaning “to be or exist,” but also to a closer and more personal relationship with man. Thus, in our second lesson we considered God, Our Father.

- II. In this lesson we want to consider yet another name of God. It is a name that Abraham called God after God provided a substitute sacrifice in the place of Isaac. We read this name in Gen. 22.

Gen 22:13-14

Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. So he took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering in place of his son. 14 Abraham named the place Yahweh-Yireh (which means "the Lord will provide"). To this day, people still use that name as a proverb: "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided." NLT

So, we have spoken about God being our Creator and God being our Father, and now we want to emphasis God, Our Provider. In this lesson we want to take a look at the name suggested by Abraham itself, then analyze the text where it is found, that is, Gen. 22:1-14, and finally, we want to look at the significance of it all.

Lesson:

I. The Surname

As indicated by the NLT, and most other English translations, the name Abraham called God means, “the Lord will provide.” It is interesting, though, that in the name Yahweh Yireh, that second word comes from the Hebrew word raw-aw which first means “to see” and is almost always translated as such in the Bible. Why then is *provide* a good translation in Genesis 22? After all, providing something and seeing something are two different things, aren’t they? Well, not really, at least not when it comes to God. Why? Because God, not only sees, but He foresees. Now, another word for see is vision and so to foresee is to have prevision. Now listen to me: because God is a giving God and One Who is full of mercy and love and compassion, to Him prevision and provision, which means to provide, are one and the same. In fact, the word prevision is a compound of two Latin words meaning “to see beforehand.” The point of it is this—when God provisions a need that we have, His love compels Him to make provisions. This is why Genesis 22:14 is translated “provide” in some translations and “see” in others.

Gen 22:14

And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen. KJV

Gen 22:14

And Abraham called the name of the place, The-Lord-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, "In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided." NKJV

Gen 22:14

Abraham named that place God-Yireh (God-Sees-to-It). That's where we get the saying, "On the mountain of God, he sees to it." (THE MESSAGE: The Bible in Contemporary Language)

If there is a message we should get from this name that Abraham called God it is that when it comes to our needs, God not only sees them, He makes provisions for them. Listen to me: God sees to it!

II. The Surroundings

Alright. Now let's look at the text. The surroundings involved in Abraham calling God Yahweh Yireh centers around the test through which God put Abraham.

Gen 22:1-2

After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." 2 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."

That God sometimes will put His people to a test is clearly taught in this passage. According to Jas. 1:13, God will never tempt a person with evil, but He will test His people once in a while. The truth is, we all need to be tested from time to time to see just where we are spiritual. But this test that Abraham experiences is no ordinary test. In fact I know of no test in the scriptures harder than the one that is before Abraham now. God calls on Abraham to offer up his son Isaac as burnt offering. Can you imagine receiving such a command. There are some brethren who struggle with sacrificing a little T.V. time or cutting back a little on recreation and relaxation for the Lord's sake. This sacrifice that Abraham is being asked to make is on a whole other level, isn't it. It would test both his faith in God and his love for God. And even the wording of the command would be hard for Abraham to take. God doesn't try to soften the command by wording it in such a way that it doesn't sound so bad. Instead He does the opposite. He reminds Abraham how hard this thing is going to be just by the wording of it. Do you see that? God doesn't just say to Abraham, "Take your son," He says, "Take your only son." And it doesn't leave it there either. He says, "Take your only son Isaac, whom you love." I'll tell you, that puts this thing in perspective, not only for Abraham, but for us. It reveals what this sacrifice is really all about. God wants to know how much Abraham loves Him. God is saying to Abraham, I know you love Isaac, but do you love me more. And it is not enough just for Abraham to say, "yes Lord." Now he has to prove it. Abraham is being put to the test. And let me tell you brethren, this is not something that God used to require, that is, loving Him most, He still requires it (**Matt. 10:34-37**).

But this is also a test of Abraham's faith, and again we see it in the very wording of the command. "Take your only son Isaac..." What does "your only son" really mean anyway? Isaac wasn't Abraham's only son. He had Ishmael by Hagar as a son too, didn't he? Listen: the word "only" here means one of a kind or unique. Now, what made Isaac unique? He was the son of promise. Isaac was the son through whom Abraham's seed would be called (**Gen. 17:15-19; 21:12**). So then, the promise has been made. Isaac cannot be replaced by anyone else. Yet, here we have God commanding Abraham to kill Isaac. From a human standpoint this command doesn't make sense. For the first time in Abraham's dealings with God, there seems to be a conflict between God's promise and God's command. If Abraham kills Isaac, he is going to make God a liar. If he doesn't kill Isaac, he is going to prove himself disobedient to God. Can you see how this would test Abraham's faith? He is going to have to work this thing out, isn't he? But, in the meantime, while he tries to reconcile God's promise and God's command, he continues to trust God.

Gen 22:3-6

So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. 4 On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. 5 Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you. 6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together". ESV

Abraham didn't hesitate, vacillate or procrastinate; he didn't put-off or postpone what God commanded him to do. Instead he got up early in the morning and got busy. Isn't it interesting that the record says that Abraham cut his own wood. He is over a hundred years old, he has servants to do that sort of thing for him, yet he cut his own wood. Why? We have no way of knowing for sure, but one thing I believe is that Abraham was working things out in his mind. He was trying to figure out exactly how the promise of God was going to line up with this command of God, and he had a little time to think about it, didn't he. It took them three days to draw near the place God commanded him to go. That's a long time to think about killing your only son, isn't it. But it appears that by the time they get to the point where they can see where they are going afar off, Abraham had it all worked out. Abraham concluded that the only solution to this whole thing was that God was going to raise Isaac from the dead. How do I know? I know it because Abraham planned for both he and Isaac to return to his servants (**ver. 5**). I also know this because of the inspired statement of the Hebrews writer (**Heb. 11:17-19**). Do you see that? Abraham reached to the point where he believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead. The word *consider* in Heb. 11:19 means, "to weigh or meditate on; to deliberate, count, compute or calculate" (Thayer). You see, Abraham had been working this thing out and he concluded that since God cannot lie and since he is about to kill Isaac, the son of promise, God is going to raise him from the dead.

Gen 22:7-8

7 And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here am I, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" 8 Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together. ESV

Isaac was pretty perceptive, wasn't he? As he and his father traveled to the designated place, he noticed that they had everything that they needed except one thing—the sacrifice. “*Where is the lamb,*” he asked. Listen to the answer now. Abraham said, “*God will provide...*” Here is the first use of the Hebrew word *raw-aw* in our text. Remember it is translated both “to see” and “to provide.” Abraham is saying to Isaac, “Don't worry son, God will see our need and make provision. God will see to it.”

Gen 22:9-10

When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son.

Can you imagine how difficult this was for both father and son? Stop and see in your mind's eye Abraham breaking the news to Isaac that he was the lamb provided by God. Hear with your imagination the cries of Isaac as he tried to come to grips with the truth that he was about to die. With the buds of your inner thoughts taste the cup of sorrow from which Abraham drank as he took the son that he waited for twenty-five years to arrive and tied him up in preparation for his sacrifice. Only the sacrifice our Savior was called upon to make can be considered as greater than this one the Patriarch Abraham was commanded to make. And just like Jesus was obedient unto death, so was Abraham willing to obey God to the end. So he reached out his hand and took the knife to do the unthinkable, that is to slaughter his son.

Gen 22:11-12

But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." 12 He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."

What a relief. What joy Abraham and Isaac must have felt when they heard the words, “Do not lay your hand on the boy...” There was no need for Abraham to finish what he had started. God has all the information that He needs. “*Now I know,*” said the angel of the Lord, “*that you fear God.*”

Gen 22:13-14

And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called the name of that place, "The Lord will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided."

Yahweh Yireh, the Lord will provide, or more accurately, God will see to it. That's what Abraham told Isaac as they approach the place where the sacrifice was to be made, and sure enough God provided. Where did this ram come from? We don't know. All we know is that God saw to it. How was it that right at that precise moment when Isaac had been spared that a ram happened to get caught in a thicket? We don't know. All we know is that the God saw to it. Remember now, this could not have been just any ram because the only kind of sacrifice that God would accept would be one without spot and without blemish. How was it that the perfect ram for an acceptable sacrifice happened along at just the right time? We don't know. All we know is that God saw to it. You see, this is the kind of God we serve. A God who knows, not only how to provide, but when

and where to provide. Our God always provides the right thing, at the right time and the right place. His provision are never too late to help us and never too early to spoil us. They are always right on time. Abraham and Isaac experienced this in dramatic fashion and so will we if we learn to trust Him like Abraham did.

III. The Significance

There are many significant lessons that can be learned about the nature of God from this great Bible story concerning Abraham and Isaac. The truth is this is not just a story about Abraham and Isaac, it is a story about God. It is a story about how God sometimes deals with man. It is a story about what God expects from man. And it is a story about the provisions that God is willing to make and indeed has already made for man. So what are some significant lessons that we can learn from our text?

A. We Learn That Faith Without Works Is Dead.

Are we saved by faith? The Bible answer is yes, but another question is, “what kind of faith saves? Or to put it a different way, “what constitutes real faith? Listen: anything that is real is more valuable isn’t it? Advertisers talk about real coffee, real leather and real TV. Coke used to be the real thing. Anything that is real is better than any alternative, isn’t it? Let me tell you something about Abraham’s faith—it was real. How do we know? He demonstrated it by his works. When James taught about real faith, he used Abraham as an example. Consider the teachings of James 2.

James 2:17

17 So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

There are those who say that James contradicted Paul by this statement. Martin Luther wanted to remove James from the canon of scriptures. But there is no contradiction between James and Paul because they were talking about two different things. Didn’t they both talk about works? Yes, but they were talking about two different kinds of works. Paul wrote about works of the law while James wrote about works of faith. Paul was wrote about the *root* of salvation (*faith as opposed to perfect living*), while James wrote about the *fruit* of salvation (*an active faith*). Paul wrote about how to become a Christian (*we are justified by faith*), while James wrote about how to behave like a Christian. Now guess what? Once you become a Christian, you must behave like a Christian or else you cease to be a Christian. Why? Because if you don’t behave like a Christian, you don’t have real faith. “Yes I do” someone says. “I believe in Jesus regardless of how I act.” Well, you might have mental assent, but that doesn’t save. Mental assent isn’t enough.

James 2:19

You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!

The demons had faith in Jesus, but they weren’t followers of Jesus. Being a follower of Jesus is what makes a person a Christian, not just believing that He exists. Listen to me: I believe in Hitler, but I’m not a Nazi. I believe in Elijah Muhammad, but I’m not a Muslim. I’m a Christian, and I am a Christian, not just

because I believe in Jesus, but because I, to the best of my ability, follow Jesus (e.g. of survey taken in So. Cal which discovered many "non-practicing Christians). James is telling us that there is no such thing as a non-practicing Christian because if you are not practicing your faith, it's not real faith.

James 2:20-25

Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. 24 You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

Why is this last state true? Because real faith is demonstrated by doing, not by talking or by thinking or even by feeling, it is demonstrated by doing. Real faith, ladies and gentlemen, is demonstrated the same way that Abraham demonstrated it under the most severe test, that is, by obeying God. It was when Abraham obeyed God that he passed the test of faith.

ill.--About 40 years ago there was a famous tightrope walker named George Blondin who, for a publicity stunt, decided he would walk across Niagara Falls on a tightrope. On the appointed day they stretched a tightrope from one side of Niagara Falls to the other. He got out there and thousands of people showed up to see this unbelievable feat. Blondin walked up to the edge of the tightrope, put one foot on the tightrope and put another foot out and began to walk across -- inch-by-inch, step-by-step. He got out in the middle and everybody knew that if he'd make one mistake in balance he'd fall off the rope and into the Falls and obviously be killed. Blondin got to the other side and the crowd went wild, shouting and cheering. Blondin said, "I'm going to do it again but this time I'm going to push a wheelbarrow full of dirt." He pushes the wheelbarrow across. He got to the other side and a tourist said, "I believe you could do that all day." Blondin dumped out the dirt and said, "Really? Get in."

When it comes to Christ, real faith will cause you to get in. If we don't learn anything else from Abraham, we learn this—faith without works is dead.

B. We Learn We Don't Need Perfect Understanding in Order to Obey.

Didn't we see this with Abraham? As we study in our text, Abraham didn't understand how God was going to fulfilled His promise if he kept God's command, but he still went forward in order to do what God told him to do. His faith was such that he believe that God would work it out. Listen to me: we need to understand what God tells us to do, but we don't always have to understand the why or the how of God's commands. Our job is to believe and obey (e.g., baptism, a cappella singing, the resurrection).

C. We Learn That God Will Provide.

Yahweh Yireh is His name and that means that God will see what we need and make provision. It means, ladies and gentlemen, that when it comes down to our

needs, God will see to it. That's the nature of our God. He is not only a creator, He is a provider. He is not only a God who sees the end from the beginning, He is a God who makes provisions for His people. Abraham believe that it was so and God didn't let him down. And let me tell you brethren, if we believe like Abraham believed; if our faith will match Abraham's faith, God won't let us down either because God hasn't change (**Psa. 102:25-27**).

Mal 3:6

"For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.

God doesn't change and so the same God that Abraham worshiped on Mt. Moriah is the God that we are worshipping right now and He continues to be a God that makes provision. Abraham anticipated this when he called the name of the place where he made his offering to God, "The-Lord-Will-Provide. Pay attention now: Abraham didn't call the place, "The Lord Has Provided," even though God had already provided the ram as a substitute for Isaac. No, Abraham learned a little something about the nature of God. God is a provider. He has provided in the past and He will provide in the future. The truth is God will never stop providing for His people. We can believe that. Abraham wasn't the only one to believe it. Paul believed it too. (**Phil. 4:19**).

Phil 4:19

And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

In a sermon entitled, "God, Our Provider" this passage certainly deserves some attention. Consider with me four important facts found in Phil. 4:19.

1. The Sovereign of the Supply—"My God"

Paul didn't say just any god will supply our needs, he said, "my God" will do it. What God was Paul talking about? Well, he only knew one God for only one true God exist. Paul is talking about Yahweh, the God of Israel Who is now our God too. He is talking about the God Who provided the Israelites with a way of escape when they stood before the Red Sea. He is talking about the God Who provided the Jews will manna when they wandered in the wilderness. He is talking about the God Who provided the Hebrew nation with a land when they had no home to call their own. He is talking about the God Who gave Gideon the power to defeat 135,000 Midianites and Amalekites with just 300 men. He is talking about the God Who provided David with the courage to go up against the Philistine giant and the strength against all odds to get the job done. Paul is talking about the God Who provided Daniel with protection when he was cast into a deadly den of lions. Paul is talking about the God Who provided Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego with perseverance to stand in the furnace of fire. This is the Sovereign that Paul says will supply our needs. No, Paul is not just talking about any god, he is talking about Yahweh, the God of Israel and now He is our God too.

2. The Sureness of the Supply—"will supply"

Notice that Paul didn't say that God might supply or that He could supply or He should supply, he said that God "will supply." He will, He will, He will. Listen to me: when others don't come to your aid, God will. When you can't meet your own need, God will. When you are struggling and can't come up with a solution to your problem, God will. But this is where our faith comes in. Remember, before God actually supplied a sacrifice for Abraham, Abraham already believed that He would. The point is this, we don't have to wait for God to move in our lives before we believe that He will, for we walk by faith, not by sight. And it is when we walk by faith that God will provide. You see faith puts us in position to receive God's provisions. Think about Abraham. He was in the right place at the right time, that is, he was where God told him to be so God provided. Sometimes people miss blessings because they are not where they are supposed to be. Some miss what God supplies at church because they are absent from services. Some miss what God supplies by family because they are absent from the home. Some miss what God supplies from heaven because they are absent from closet of prayer. If you want God to supply your need, make sure you are where you are supposed to be and then walk by faith.

3. The Sufficiency of the Supply—"every need"

Isn't this comforting? We don't have worry about some need arising in our lives that God can't handle. He's omnipotent, He can handle any need. We don't have to worry about some need arising in our lives that God doesn't know about. He's omniscient, He knows what we need now and what we are going to need tomorrow. Remember, Yireh means "God sees." Now let's just think for a moment about what we need. We need physical provisions. Well, God will provide (**Matt. 6:25-33**). We need spiritual provisions. Well, God will, in fact, God already has, provided (**2 Pet. 1:5**). What has God provided for us spiritually. First, He provided a Lamb to be sacrificed in our place. This was the sacrifice that was foreshadowed by the story of Abraham and Isaac. God provided a ram for Abraham and He has provided a Lamb for the redemption of man (**1 Jn. 1:19**).

But just providing the Lamb wasn't enough. A sacrifice had to be made. Blood had to be shed. The ram being caught in the thicket wasn't the end of the story in Gen. 22, was it. Abraham had to take the ram and offer it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. And Jesus, the precious Lamb of God, had to be, not just provided, but sacrificed. His blood had to be shed and it was (**1 Pet. 1:18-20**).

What else do we need spiritually? We need forgiveness when we sin. Well, God will supply (**1 Jn. 1:8-2:2**). Furthermore, we need the Word of God to guide us and show us the way. Well, God will, in fact, he already has, provided (**Jude 3; Tit. 2:11-14**).

4. The Source of the Supply—“according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

What resources! No wonder we can have confidence that our God will supply. We have a wealthy Heavenly Father. His wealth is immeasurable. He is the One who created diamonds, rubies, gold, silver, and oil. No one can come close in comparison to the wealth of God. He can supply any need we have now and in the future. In Christ we have a wonderful inheritance waiting for us in heaven and we have all the provisions we need provided for us right now. Truly our God is a great provider and He will provide all of our needs. He may not give us everything we want, wish or desire, but He will satisfy our every need, and we don't have to worry about His provisions running out.

Conclusion:

Yes, we serve a wonderful God. He is our Creator. He is our Father, and as a faithful Father, He is our Provider who makes provision for all that we need.