



September 17, 2006

*For Now I Know ...*

God promised Abram and Sarai, later renamed by God as Abraham and Sarah, that they would have a son. The couple up to this time had been barren and thus without an heir. It was through this child of promise, Isaac, that God would eventually bless the entire world as he brought his son into it as the redeemer of all mankind. Remarkably, in **Genesis 22**, God commanded Abraham to take his son and sacrifice him as a burnt offering. As Abraham raised his hand to take the life of his only son, the Lord sent an angel to stop him. The next remark that God made is an interesting one and perhaps has caused some confusion over the years for some. The angel told Abraham, “...**for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.**” (**Gen 22.12**). Some see this as evidence that God is not “all knowing” and therefore use it as an argument against the Bible. God was quite aware of the character of Abraham. Prior to revealing the judgment that was being delivered against Sodom and Gomorrah, we read, “**Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do .... For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment**” (**Gen 18.17,19**). James tells us that “...**God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man...**” (**James 1.13**). God tested the faith of Abraham in this incident. A faith that God knew Abraham possessed. How is it then that God would have done such a thing? One possibility is that while God knows the future and what will happen, as demonstrated by the prophets in their descriptions of things that were to happen long before they occurred, it may be that God allows those who serve him to prove themselves before him by their actions. When we turn to the scriptures we find that this is consistent with what we are told. We never find God forcing anyone to do what is inconsistent with their character. We find that those who sought God were able to find him, and those who rejected and hated God were allowed to continue until such time as God rendered judgment against them in a variety of means. It is also a reality that God allows his servants to be tested by not removing all things that are bad from our lives. Abraham was called upon to offer up his only son, the child that he loved greatly, for the sake of doing the will of God. In the same manner God offered up his only son for the sins of a world that, for the most part, will not recognize or obey God. Obedience is a statement of love and gratitude for the things that God has done for us. There are religious folks who tend to interpret everything that happens in life as a test from God to see if we are going to be faithful. Indeed we can consider all of life a test, but we must realize that the things that occur are not the product of God. We are surrounded by our own weaknesses and common problems of life, the influence of a world that tends to seek personal interests and gratification first, and the underlying influence of Satan as he seeks to devour those that are weak and undefended (**1 Pet 5.8**). The interesting thing about the offering of Isaac by Abraham is that this event foreshadows the coming of Christ. Abraham was called upon to offer up his only son, the child of promise, as a sacrifice, in the very place where centuries later God’s son, the promised Messiah, would be offered for the sins of the world. There may not be a divine purpose in all that we experience in this life but we cannot predict the impact of a godly example on those around us. Joseph had no idea that the things that were occurring were being allowed by God to save the family of Abraham, and the Egyptians, until much later. In the absence of that knowledge Joseph persevered and remained faithful to God when there was no human reason to do so. The psalmist, speaking of Joseph, writes, “**Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him.**” (**Psm 105.18-19**). As Christians each day is a test of faith and we have the choice of remaining what God wants us to be or failing. There are those who allow themselves to become disappointed when bad things happen, or when their own ideas of what they should “receive” for their service are not met. Many fall away because they do not realize that we are working on a home and reward that has nothing to do with the present world that shall be done away with. Abraham was one of those and the writer of Hebrews, discussing the character of the faithful, states, “**And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.**” (**Heb 11.39-40**). God knows, but do we ?

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