

Isaac and Abraham - Same But Different

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again for a little to the chapter that we read in the book of Genesis chapter 26 and reading at verse 24.

The Lord appeared to him, that's to Isaac, that same night and said, I am the God of Abraham your father. Fear not, for I am with you and will bless you and multiply your offspring for my servant Abraham's sake and so on.

Now we've been looking at different Bible characters for the last wee while. We saw Ananias who was the obedient disciple. Then we looked at Belshazzar and Bartimaeus.

We contrasted them. We saw blind Belshazzar and seeing Bartimaeus. We saw Caleb, the man who always followed God. We saw David, the man who always followed God.

David, the man who was so godly and yet so human. We saw Elijah, the fearless, fearful prophet. We saw Felix, the man who trembled.

[1 : 16] Then we saw Gideon, who was the reluctant hero. And Hannah, who was the gracious, praying woman. And now we're looking at Isaac. And we could say of Isaac, Isaac and Abraham almost the same.

Father and son, same but different. Now recently we were looking at, before that, we were looking at the life of Abraham. And went through it quite, I suppose, we looked at a lot regarding Abraham's life.

And one of the things while we were looking at the life of Abraham, we obviously touched on something of Isaac. Because Isaac features very, very much in Abraham's life.

You remember how God had given Abraham great promises about how they would become, how he would become the father of a great nation. And Abraham and Sarah, his wife, waited and waited and waited year after year after year.

And they had no child. They believed God's promises, but as the time went on, it became less and less and less likely. And you remember after Sarah's suggestion that Abraham took Hagar, the servant girl that he had taken from Egypt, and took her as a wife, and had a child, Ishmael.

[2 : 44] They tried to help God. And we saw how foolish that is, how prone we are to try and help God when things aren't materializing the way we expect. Because so often as we read God's word and believe his word, we anticipate life working out in a particular way.

And when it doesn't, sometimes our faith wobbles, or sometimes we try and help God. But God will often, through these times, teach us to wait upon him.

Because he has a time, a perfect time for everything. And of course, Abraham and Sarah went ahead of God. And the child that was born to Hagar, Ishmael, wasn't the child of promise.

But in due time, when Sarah was beyond naturally being able to bear children, and Abraham was naturally beyond being able to father a child, God renewed them, reinvigorated them.

And they were able to have a child. And that child was born according to the promise. And the New Testament highlights these two children, Ishmael and Isaac, as the one child born after the flesh, and the other child born after the spirit.

[4 : 10] And that's a great picture of the conflict that goes on within a person's heart, a person's life when they become Christians. Because we know there's a battle that takes place between the flesh and the spirit.

And the flesh wants to serve self. The flesh, our own base human nature, isn't interested in God, or serving God, or giving in to God, or yielding to God, or going the ways of God.

But the Holy Spirit coming to dwell within us, inclines us to God, to the things of God, to the will of God, to the way of God. And so there's this ongoing conflict between the flesh and the spirit, where you have the like of the Apostle Paul saying, the good that I would, I do not, and the evil that I would

not, that I do.

And that is a conflict that goes on throughout our lives as believers. It is a conflict that will remain with us all our days. So we know that Isaac, as we said, was the child of promise.

And it was going to be through him that God's promises to Abraham were going to be fulfilled. And then God's promises would be fulfilled to Isaac's children.

[5 : 34] And so on. And God said eventually all the nations of this world were going to be blessed. And we see the fulfillment of that promise being fulfilled in Jesus Christ and the subsequent spread of the gospel throughout the world.

Now, Isaac, of course, one of the features of Isaac's life, which kind of distinguished, and we'll see that in a moment, from Abraham's, Isaac seemed to be an incredibly peaceful man, very non-confrontational.

Abraham, on the other hand, was much more confrontational. We'll see that in a moment. But anyway, Isaac seems to have been a very submissive type of character.

And we see that with regard to the wells, that rather than fighting about it or confronting the Philistines when there would be problems with the well, he would just move on.

And something of that submission was very evident in his early life because we've got to remember the most awful, supreme moment in Abraham's life was where he offered up Isaac.

[6 : 47] At a human level, now I'm not going into that because we've already studied, we've looked at the offering up of Isaac by Abraham. But from a human level, it's an awful picture that was shown.

But of course, we see that this was where God is demonstrating one of the greatest or the supreme act that ever took place in this world was the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's a great picture of all that unfolded there. But Isaac, we've got to remember, wasn't just a little boy. He would have been a young, strong lad.

And there is no doubt but that he believed also what God was telling Abraham and was, I believe, had the faith like his father.

Remember, Abraham's faith was such that he believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead. That if he sacrificed him, that God would raise him from the dead.

[7 : 51] Abraham was fully persuaded of that. The New Testament tells us that. And I believe that Isaac was also persuaded of that. Because it tells us that Abraham taught his household well.

And Isaac, as a young boy growing up, was taught in the faith. He believed in God. He believed in God's power, in God's word. And so, there's no doubt but that this was part of Isaac's great submission in going on to the altar.

Again, we saw, just as we were concluding the study of Abraham, when Abraham sent for a wife for Isaac, we saw that as Rebecca was approaching, Isaac didn't know that this was a moment Rebecca was approaching, but we find him out in the fields meditating, which involved praying. And it was a lovely way to be, as Rebecca was coming closer with the servant, Isaac was out in the fields praying. And the Bible, long before Isaac ever knew that it was written in the word, a prudent wife is from the Lord, Isaac knew that.

And Isaac was praying that the Lord, obviously, that the Lord would guide and that the Lord would bring. And that's exactly what happened. And then we find again, Isaac is a man of prayer because they went a long time married.

[9 : 21] They were 20 years married and there was no sign of a child. And again, Isaac was aware of the promises that had been given to Abraham and the promises that were now upon him that the Lord was going to give to him children and his children children and so on.

And so we find Isaac, he goes to the Lord and he asks the Lord about it and he prays to the Lord regarding this. And of course, the Lord heard his prayer and they had the twins, Jacob and Esau. And remember how Rebecca herself went to the Lord in prayer regarding what was going on. And because she was aware that there was a lot of going on in her as she carried what she didn't know initially were twins, but was told by the Lord that they were twins and that the older would serve the younger.

But then we find that a famine comes in the land and Isaac has to move and he goes down to Gerad, to the Philistines. And whether he was intending to go to Egypt or not, I don't know, but the Lord appeared to him and he said, don't go down to Egypt.

And Isaac listened to the Lord. Whether the Lord had told Abraham not to go to Egypt, we don't know, but the visit to Egypt was a disaster for Abraham because Abraham sinned in Egypt and Abraham taking Hagar back.

[10:54] We've got to remember that the conflict that goes on to this very day in the Middle East finds its source in the birth of Ishmael and Isaac.

That conflict that began there, you remember how Ishmael began to mock Isaac and in the end Abraham had to put Hagar and Ishmael away.

Well, the tensions that began there, the conflict that began there, and they became both of them, Ishmael and Isaac, the fathers of two different races.

That conflict that goes on in the Middle East began then. It's the same conflict, the same, it comes from there. So you can see how, how disaster it can be when we step outside God's will, when we go our own way, where we go where we're not supposed to go.

And that's what, that's what Abraham had done. So God is warning Isaac, don't you do what your father did. And Isaac listened to the Lord and he stayed in Gerah.

[12:02] But, very interestingly, we find, although there are similarities, a lot of similarities between Isaac and Abraham, there are also differences. But the similarities don't just concern the worship and the obedience, they also are found regarding the sins.

Like father, like son. Abraham, because, you remember, Abraham was afraid when he went to Egypt. And again, at another occasion, amongst the Philistines, he was afraid that they would kill him because of Sarah, because Sarah was very beautiful.

And he lied, saying, Sarah, actually, is my sister. Here is Isaac, and he does exactly the same thing with Rebecca.

Because when he goes amongst the Philistines and he says, she is my sister. And he was afraid that if he told that Rebecca was his wife, that they would kill her.

They kill him, sorry, in order to get her. And it was one day the king of Bimelech was looking out and he saw, now it's a play on the words here where it says he saw Isaac laughing with Rebecca.

[13:19] Now you remember that Isaac's name actually means laughter. So, it's just a play on the words, but it is, the idea is caressing where he was being intimate with his wife.

And straight away, Bimelech says, that's not his sister, that's his wife. And so he calls for Isaac and he says, what have you done? You said that that was your sister.

She is your wife. And Isaac holds up his hand and admits and he said, yes, I was afraid. And he's, and even although this is a heathen king, we can see the, the kind of, the moral stand that he's taken.

He said, do you not realize one of, one of the, my men might have gone with her, laid with her, and then you would have brought guilt upon us.

And you know, it's a sad thing when the world rebukes the church. When sometimes the world's standards can sometimes be a wee bitty better in occasions than the church.

[14:28] And these are things that should not be. And here we find a heathen king and he's rebuking God's servant in this world because of his wrong life, because of his, because of his, his lies.

And when we lie, we're always imitating the father of lies who is the devil. We've always got to remember that. That truth originates with God.

Jesus says, I am the truth. Jesus said, I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life. The Christian has to be open and transparent. We can't, you know, today we talk about putting spin.

Politicians put a spin. Spin, that's actually lies. I'm not saying that, I'm just using the example of politicians. There's loads of people use today in society what they term, they put a spin on it.

And a spin is in order to deceive people so that what is or what they're trying to say to you isn't actually how it is. And God doesn't like that.

[15:38] It doesn't matter how people may in society actually operate in that way, it is wrong. All lies come from the father of lies come from the devil.

Truth comes from the Lord. So, we should always be seeking to operate by the truth. And then we see that Isaac settled down in this land and the Lord richly blessed him.

And his harvest the first year of sowing was a hundredfold. Talk of rich blessing. It wasn't just a bumper harvest. It was an absolutely awesome harvest. But you see what happened.

God opened the windows of heaven upon Isaac and he blessed everything that he did. But, as so often happens, when somebody gets on and prospers, the knives are out.

As long as Isaac was just living amongst the people, everything was all right. Philistines, hi Isaac, how are you doing? Good, nice to see you, nice day. Everything is fine. Until God begins to prosper him, his crops grow, he has more cattle, more sheep, more harvest than any of the Philistines round.

[16:53] Everything changes. They go against him. The knives are out. They envy him. And so, now the conflicts begin.

And isn't that so often the case? It shows something of the horribleness of our human nature.

Where we hate to see people succeed. It is so wrong, it is so sinful, but unfortunately it is part of human nature that as soon as a person gets on, you want to knock that person down.

Well, it is a fearful reflection on society because God, God often chooses to bless, chooses to prosper people. Not that that's, there isn't a promise that God is going to do that.

We look for that spiritually more than temporally, but God sometimes chooses to do that temporarily as well. But it's an awful thing to envy anybody.

And the moment that jealousy or envy gets into a person's heart, side by side with jealousy and envy is the sin of murder. And you may say to yourself, well that's a bit dramatic.

[18:04] No, it's not. That's exactly, we've said it over and over and over again, that's exactly what the Bible says. Bible shows us that envy equals murder.

You look at Abel and Cain. Abel made the sacrifice, Cain made the sacrifice, God accepted Abel's sacrifice but not Cain. Cain was jealous of his brother.

What did he do? He killed his brother. That's what jealousy does. Why was Joseph sold as a slave into Egypt? Because his brothers were jealous of him.

Why did Saul throw a spear at David and try and pin him to the wall and then hunt him in the mountains for seven years trying to kill him? Because he was jealous of him.

Why was Daniel put into a den of lions to be devoured and killed? Because the others were jealous of him. Why was Jesus put to the cross?

[19:05] We're told that for envy they delivered him up. That's why I'm saying envy equals death. Envy equals murder.

And pray against the sin of envy because it is murderous in its intent. And that's what happened straight away. There was this collision course and the Philistines who had been fine with Isaac up till now now turn against him.

And everywhere there's contention. And it's very interesting too that the wells had been stopped. They had filled up the wells. And again that actually was an awful thing to do to fill up wells in a wilderness in a desert.

You see the well is where you get your water and without water you die. And to fill up the wells would bring would ultimately bring death. That's why they were having to re-dig and find out again because these wells had been stopped that Abraham had dug.

And you know in a sense that's exactly where we are today. Because the wells of salvation which we find in the church that the world is trying to fill these wells and to stop these wells.

[20:27] There are so many people today in our land and their aim is to remove God from all the public place. They want God out of the schools.

They want God out of out of life in general. People say it's alright you can if you want to worship God you worship God on your own but leave God leave God out of society.

We don't want God in society. We don't want him in our economic strategies. We don't want him in our political life. We don't want him in any other place but in the privacy of your own place.

If you want to worship that's fine but we don't want God in our educational system anywhere. There are so many people and that's the way they're thinking. Well that's what they're doing. They're filling up the wells.

They're trying to stop the wells. And it's happening. We need to pray against that. So many people are determined to do that. And this is where we see one of the great differences as we said between Abraham and Isaac.

[21:32] Isaac was a man of peace. Abraham confronted things. Remember when Lot's herdsmen fell out with his? He went and he dealt with it. He confronted the issue.

It was the same with Hagar and Ishmael. He had to take decisions along there however difficult they were. He confronted the kings in order to recover Lot.

He confronted the Philistines. He was a man of peace but there were times confrontation was required. And when it was Abraham always met it.

But Isaac on the other hand he was a pilgrim and stranger same as his father but he just moved on. He would say why are you doing that? But there would be a bit of contention and then he would move on.

But you know having said that Isaac as a man of peace we know that it's not always possible but we should always always seek to promote peace.

[22 : 32] It is part of what we're about because the gospel is a gospel of peace. Jesus is a prince of peace. God is a God of peace. Jesus' legacy to the church as he was leaving was my peace I leave with you.

Not as the world gives give I unto you. Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall obtain the kingdom of God. Peace is essential and we should always be seeking to promote it.

In fact the Bible says if it is possible as much as depends on you live peaceably with all people. So the wells were being re-dug and as we know that Jesus Christ is the the true living water.

He is the well of salvation. And can I say to you if there's anybody in here today who has not drunk from the well that is Jesus Christ I urge you to go to him.

Remember when he met the woman of Samaria at the well and he said to her that anyone who drinks of me will drink everlasting life. Will drink up a water that will continue to flow.

[23 : 47] And that's what Jesus does for our life. He brings fresh satisfying invigorating life into our lives.

That which sustains us that which nourishes us that which helps us along the way. Remember the great invitation whoever he won that thirsteth come ye to the waters and to drink.

Jesus today is offering himself again to us. But then we find that Isaac as he is here at Beersheba just before the Philistines come to him we find that Isaac that's what it says from there he went up to Beersheba and the Lord appeared to him the same night and said I am the God of Abraham your father so the Lord is here renewing the promises and he says to him fear not and you know that is the command that the Lord gives most in the whole Bible is the command fear not don't be afraid he says it over and over and over and over and over again all the time we find that don't be afraid he said it to Abraham and he's saying it again to

Isaac he said it to Moses at the Red Sea he said it to Joshua as he was beginning to lead Israel in taking the promised land and he is saying it over and over and over fear not why because see what he says I am with you that's why you're not to fear it's all very well saying fear not you know when God says fear not he always gives a reason there's no point in sometimes saying to somebody don't worry it'll be alright and you say to people it's all very well for you to say don't worry it'll be alright how do you know it'll be alright maybe we don't have any reason to give why it's going to be alright that's not the way God does it God says fear not and then he tells us why and he says here don't fear fear not he says for I am with you isn't that wonderful wherever you go Isaac count on it I am with you and that never God doesn't come along with us and say well right I'm with you just now see you're going through a difficult time I'm going to be with you afterwards I'm afraid you're going to be on your own God doesn't work like that when God is with you when God comes in when God if you are a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ God is with you always every day he doesn't come and go even although your feelings may come and go even although your walk with the Lord may come and go he is always with you I am with you he was with Joseph when he was in the as a slave in Egypt when he was a prisoner and when he was in the palace the same God was the same way all the time with Joseph Joseph's circumstances changed the Lord didn't the same with David when David was hiding in the caves and when

[27 : 24] David was sitting on the throne in the palace the Lord was with him exactly the same David's circumstances changed but the Lord didn't he was always with him and then he says and I will bless you isn't that wonderful I will bless you I will be always with you and I will bless you and how little we understand often just how amazing God's blessing is where he gives us pardon and peace where he gives us a sense of his presence his joy his love you know God is blessing us if you are a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ the Lord is blessing you all the time now that doesn't mean you're not going to go through difficult times it doesn't mean that your life has always been on a smooth you and I know it hasn't some of you in here you have suffered terribly but the

Lord is with you and his overriding purpose is blessing and at the end of the day you will be able to say as the psalm says goodness and mercy has followed me all the days of my life and you know when you come to dwell in the house of the Lord forever and the Lord enables you to look back over the providences of this life you will see that even in these black dark awful times he was still with you and his ultimate purpose was to bless you in glory you will see how that is actually true maybe today you can't but one day you will because it is his aim his purpose to bless I hope today that you your heart is open to Jesus and that you are saying to the Lord Lord I need you I want you to be with me every day and I want you to bless me will you ask him to do that because if you do then he will hear your prayer and he will answer it let us pray oh Lord our God we pray to watch over us and to do us good we give thanks Lord for your we pray that you will bless us with every blessing spiritually and temporally we pray to bless a cup of tea and coffee in the hall after and take us all to our home safely do us good and cleanse us from our every sin in Jesus name Amen let us conclude singing in Psalm number 63 from the Scottish Psalter Psalm number 63 it's on page 295 Lord thee my God I rarely seek my soul doth thirst for thee my flesh longs in a dry parched land where in no waters be that I thy power may behold and brightness of thy face as I have seen thee heretofore within thy holy place since better is thy love than life my lips thee praise shall give I in thy name will lift my hands and bless thee while I live Psalm 63 1-5 Lord be my my my my God my God I seek my soul thirst for thee my flesh longs in a dry first land wherein no water speak that I thy power may be old and bright is of thy face as I have seen thee here too for within thy holy place since bad charis my lips the lips the praise shall give I in thy name lift my hands and bless thee while I live in not with marrow with fat my soul shall fill it be then shall my mouth with joy who lips sing praises on to they now may the grace mercy and peace of [33 : 11] God the Father Son and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forever more amen