

Hymns: 26 Trust and Obey 59 Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us
Scripture: Psalm 23; Psalm 100

Have you been following the presidential primary elections? It's been quite an ordeal to this point and it's not over. Trump, Cruz, Clinton, and Sanders – the drama drags on. But one of the of the most vexing problems we have as voters is trying to sort out which politician is lying and more importantly which (if any) is telling the truth. You've herd the joke of course if a politician's lips are moving he's lying.

Speaking of dishonest politicians, we've all heard the expression; *wolves in **sheep's** clothing*. Can anyone guess where that came from?

Matthew 7

*[15] Beware of false prophets, which come to you in **sheep's** clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*

The metaphors of *sheep*, *shepherd*, and in particular *lamb* permeate God's word. Our study of dispensations has taken us to a fundamental passage. Today we will consider the stunning significance of *the lamb* in scripture.

Our study will show:

a great **victory** of faith in Abraham's life,
the way God works to test us, and
the provision God has made for us.

Let's get started.

Last time we saw how the Lord told Abraham and Sarah, who were **far past** child-bearing age, that Sarah would bear a son. They **both** laughed at God. Abraham even told God to use his son Ishmael instead. God told them they would name their son *Isaac*, which **means laughter**. When Isaac was born, just as the Lord had said, Abraham circumcised him when he was eight days old, and everyone **laughed with joy** as they contemplated the miracle baby.

We'll pick up our story in Genesis 21:

*[9] And Sarah saw **the son** of Hagar the Egyptian, which she [Hagar] had born unto Abraham, **mocking**.*

Ishmael, Hagar's son mocked Isaac, Sarah's son.

*[10] Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and **her son**: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with **my son**, even with Isaac.*

*[11] And the thing was **very grievous** in Abraham's sight because of his son.*

Clearly Abraham cared deeply for his son Ishmael.

[12] And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad,

and because of thy bondwoman;

*in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, **hearken unto her voice**; for **in Isaac** shall thy seed be called.*

The last time we were told about Abraham listening to Sarah, things did not **work** out well, but this time, the Lord backed her.

*[13] And also **of** the son of the bondwoman will*

I make a nation,

*[why?] because he is **thy** seed.*

So Abraham gave Hagar provisions to carry and sent her away with Ishmael early in the morning. She wandered in Beersheba. Beersheba is located on the northern edge of the Negev **desert** about 75 miles southwest of Jerusalem.

When the water gave out, Hagar put her nearly dead son in the shade, walked far enough away not to see him die, and wept. The angel of God answered her there and met their need.

If God heard the cry of Ishmael, will He not hear ours also? Yes, He will.

The Bible says they survived, went on to live their lives, and God **did** make from Ishmael a **great** nation.

Gen.22

*[1] And it came to pass after these things, that God te[st]t[ed] Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, **here I am**.*

*[2] And he said, **Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest**, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.*

Notice God called Isaac Abraham's **only** son. Ishmael was cast away at this point. Notice also the parallel between

his beloved only son

to Jesus Christ, God's beloved only Son.

Clearly, Isaac is a type of Christ. Some believe the spot for the sacrifice was the same place where Jesus was crucified. That would make sense because God was so specific regarding where this sacrifice should take place.

Did you ever wonder where Sarah was during all of this? The Bible doesn't say, but let's try something fun to envision it. Who remembers those days of audio comedy recordings. You know, the era of Bill Cosby, Bob Newhart, and Flip Wilson. They recorded their funniest stories and sold them on things called LP disks that were played on record players. The heyday was sometime around the mid-sixties. It was great to listen to them and just laugh.

Bob Newhart was a master of the telephone skit. He would hold a telephone receiver in his hand and act as if he was on one side of the line while he repeated enough of the conversation on the other side to keep you in on it.

Could you imagine what the conversation would have been between Sarah and Abraham at this time? Here's my attempt of doing a Bob Newhart audio skit:

Hello? Oh, hi Honey.

Isaac? Oh, he's fine. He's with me.

Where are we? Isaac and I are on our way to Mount Moriah

Yeah, I know yeah it's three days journey from home.

Why are we going? I'm going to sacrifice our son, Isaac, as a burnt offering.

[pulls the phone away due to the volume of her shouts]

Calm down. No, I'm not crazy.

Why am I doing it? Oh, the Lord **told** me to.

[pulling the phone away from his ear again]

It's okay. I know the Lord said a multitude would descend from him. The Lord will raise him up. (Hebrews 11:19)

What's that? Well, no He didn't **say** that exactly, but I **know** He will.

You say you don't believe me?

You think I've lost my mind?

You think I should leave Isaac with you. Uh huh.

And then I should go to Moriah. Yeah.

And jump off a cliff!

And see if the Lord brings **me** back to life!

We've got to go now. We'll see you in about a week. Love ya, Honey. Bye.

Do I think Abraham told Sarah that he was taking Isaac to sacrifice him? No, I don't. But it's mind numbing to consider what he must have thought during that three-day journey. How he would explain to Sarah what he had done if he returned without Isaac? Here's how the Bible tells the story:

*[3] And Abraham rose up early in the morning,
and saddled his ass,
and took two of his young men with him,
and Isaac his son,*

and [split] the wood for the burnt offering,

and rose up,

and went unto **the** place of which God had told him.

[4] Then on the **third day** Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

That *third day* is interesting. As Jesus was dead in the grave three days, Isaac was as good as dead in Abraham's mind as he set out in obedience to God to sacrifice his son.

[5] And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, **and come again to you,**

[6] And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering,

and laid it upon Isaac his son;

and he took the fire in his hand,

and a knife;

and they went both of them together.

Notice here, Isaac was old enough and strong enough to carry sufficient wood for a burnt offering. Notice too **as** Isaac carried wood for his sacrifice, Jesus Christ carried his wooden cross up perhaps this same mountain.

[7] And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, **Here am I**, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but **where is the lamb** for a burnt offering?

Abraham hadn't told Isaac either. This was Abraham's test, and his alone.

[8] And Abraham said, My son, **God will provide himself a lamb** for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

[9] And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

[10] And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

Tune in next time for the exciting conclusion of this story...just kidding.

[11] And the angel of the LORD

Did you catch that? It spoke of "the angel of the LORD" which often we believe to refers to the pre-incarnate Christ. So what do we have here? We've got Abraham the father, we've got Isaac the only son, we've got God the Father in heaven, and the pre-incarnate only Son of God. What a scene!

called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, **Here am I**.

[12] *And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast **not** withheld thy son, **thine only son** from me.*

Of course, there's a very convicting application here for us as well. What most precious thing are we clinging to and putting ahead of God? God doesn't want our stuff. He wants us. He wants to be number one.

[13] *And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and **behold** behind him a **ram** caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the **ram**, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.*

(substitutionary death)

[14] *And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh [the Lord sees and provides]: ...*

[15] *And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,*

[16] *And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for [why?] **because thou hast done this thing, and hast not** withheld thy son, **thine only son**:*

Here comes God's promise:

[17] *That*

in blessing I will bless thee,

and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed

*as the **stars of the heaven**,*

*and as the **sand** which is upon the sea shore;*

and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

[18] *And **in** thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;*

*[why?] because thou hast **obeyed** my voice.*

We sang "Trust and Obey" today. Obedience is important.

That's the story that has direct application to this **dispensation of promise** and fits in with the Easter season which we celebrated just last month, but let's peruse some other verses to bring to light more of this concept of the Lamb:

Isaiah 53

[6] *All we like **sheep** have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him [that's Jesus – the Lamb of God] the iniquity of us all.*

[7] *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a **lamb** to the slaughter, and as **a sheep** before her shearers is dumb, so he open[ed] not his mouth.*

Remember Isaac in our story. His elderly father Abraham was likely not as strong as him at that point. It didn't matter though because Isaac faced this sacrifice willingly. Without objection he obeyed his to the point of laying down his own life.

But there's more in the Bible about sheep. Do you remember the Christmas story?

Luke 2

*[8] And there were in the same country [what?] **shepherds** abiding in the field, keeping watch over [what?] their **flock** by night.*

*[10] And the angel said unto them, **Fear not**: for, **behold**, I bring you **good tidings of great joy**, which shall be to **all** people.*

[11] For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

*[12] And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying [where?] in **a manger**.*

Shepherds, flocks, and the innocent Lamb of God lying in a manger.

John 1

*[29] The next day John [John the Baptist] seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the **Lamb** of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*

I Peter 1

[18] Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, ...

*[19] But with the precious blood of Christ, **as of a lamb** without blemish and without spot:*

The Book of Revelation is particularly interesting regarding this usage of the word *lamb*. It's the unveiling of Jesus Christ yet it refers to Him **most frequently** as the Lamb. Here are some highlights:

Revelation 5

*[6] And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood **a Lamb** as it had been slain, ...*

*[8] And when **he** had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before **the Lamb**, ...*

*[12] Saying with a loud voice, **Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.***

*[13] And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, ..., heard I saying, **Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.***

Revelation 6

*[1] And I saw when **the Lamb** opened one of the seals, ...*

*[16] ... [every man] said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the **wrath of the Lamb**:*

*[17] For the **great day of his wrath is come**; and who shall be able to stand?*

Revelation 17

*[14] These **shall make war with the Lamb**,
and **the Lamb shall overcome them**:*

Who is this Lamb?

for he is Lord of lords,

and King of kings: ...

There's no mistaking who this Lamb is.

Revelation 19

*[7] Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for **the marriage of the Lamb** is come, and his wife [the saints] hath made herself ready.*

Revelation 21

*[23] And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and **the Lamb is the light thereof**.*

Revelation 22

*[1] And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of **the throne of God and of the Lamb**.*

Application

We saw today that Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God -- foreshadowed in the birth and sacrifice of Isaac and prophesied to be slain for the sins of the world. He was:

born in a manger,
announced to **shepherds**,
proclaimed the **Lamb** of God,
declared worthy of glory, honor, and power in heaven,
declared King of Kings and Lord of Lords,
called the bridegroom of the saints,
made the light of heaven and earth and,
seated on the throne of God.

At the outset, we considered the dilemma we face in *choosing* our elected representatives. Yet in this life we have a far more consequential choice to make. Psalm 23 declares us as sheep. The Lamb is one of us. The Lamb of God stands at your heart's door knocking. Will you open to Him? And will you walk in faith and obedience to Him as did Abraham and Isaac and receive His blessing?

What will **you** do with Lamb of God?

Benediction

*Now the God of peace,
that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus,
that great **shepherd of the sheep**,
through the blood of the everlasting covenant,
Make you perfect in every good work to do his will,
working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight,
through Jesus Christ;
to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. (Hebrews 13:20-21)*

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