

## A Ram And A Thicket

Genesis 22:13

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.

### **Old Testament Concealed. New Testament Revealed.**

We recognize the strong redemptive overtures towards New Covenant promises and the dynamic symbolism of this scriptural setting. Bible students agree that truth is often integrated and introduced through typology. It comes, therefore, as no surprise that this antitype displays Abraham's willingness to obediently please God by offering his son Isaac upon an altar in Genesis 22 and is a foreshadowing of the climatical redemptive work on Calvary. The Old Testament provides a plethora of spiritual glimpses and scriptural insights into the work of the cross.

### **THE CROSS BEFORE CALVARY**

Historically, Isaac has represented the earthly humanity of Christ or the son of man named Jesus. Abraham, in his role as an earthly father, symbolizes our Heavenly Father, or the deity of Christ. Here the altar stands out to us as the precise venue of blood where the actual sacrifice would be offered, i.e., the place of the skull or Calvary's hill. Calvary was the venue. The cross was the event. Abraham's physically challenging three-day journey up Mt. Moriah just prior to his offering of Isaac ministers to us in the role of Christ's spiritual challenge and spiritual struggle in the garden of Gethsemane just before His crucifixion.

So we see Moriah as a type of Gethsemane. The ram represents the substitutionary sacrifice provided by God Himself. God's covenant title is revealed in this setting as Jehovahjireh (verse 14) or God in His role as the provider of Covenant salvation. The dual nature and role of Christ in this chapter as the sacrificial ram transcends the singular role of Jesus as exclusively the son of man or as simply just Isaac. Christ was very God and very man. In biblical reality, we can testify that Jesus was more than just a man. Again, we recognize His duality of redemptive aspects as the son of man (Isaac) and as the Son of God (Savior) through both the earthly man Isaac and the sacrificial ram as characterized in this setting. The spiritual reflections reveal the dual nature of the God-man Himself: Jesus Christ in His distinctive roles as both an earthly man, humbly submitted to the will of his father, and as God the eternal Father who willingly offered His all, through a lamb slain before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). Indeed God was in Christ.

This prophetic scenery is more than poetic; it is intimately and intensely revelatory. The tenets of the Old Covenant required men and prophets to look forward towards the cross, a work that at that time seemed shrouded in mystery unto them. Today, we of the transformative New Covenant experience enjoy the benefits of looking back at the marvelously unveiled and spiritually living monument of the cross (I Cor. 1:18). Christ, along with the work of the cross, stands throughout scripture as concealed truth in the Old, unto revealed truth in the New.

## **THE RAM**

In a Christocentric monotheistic view of the Godhead, we understand that Jesus as the ram was not merely nor exclusively the earthly son of man (Isaac) but so much the more as the savior of the world. (Ram) For Christ was Emmanuel or God with us. His name (the ram) shall be called Jesus, for he shall save men from their sins (Matt.1:21). No mortal earthly man is capable of forgiving or atoning sins and saving lost souls. Knowing that God the eternal Father (deity) dwelt in Christ (humanity) and whereas Christ being born of a woman under the law (Gal. 4:4) was the physical manifestation of the eternal God, we further understand that Jesus was emphatically the spotless lamb needed to fulfill the mandates and requisites of Levitical law (Hebrews 4:15). The earthly mission requisite of God in Christ was to fulfill all the Levitical law, not destroy it (Matthew 5:17). Consequently, God the Father became our near kinsman after the flesh through His manifestation in Christ (John 1:14). Henceforth, Jesus Christ, the son of man, was indeed that spotless lamb provided and offered by God for the redemption of all mankind. We have a scriptural witness that men beheld the glory of God the eternal Father through the physical and earthly man Jesus Christ (John 1:14 & 2 Cor. 4:6). The blood of the sacrificial ram of Genesis 22 is symbolically reflective of the spiritual lamb Jesus Christ in His role as savior of the world by His death on a cross, through the physical and literal shedding of blood needed. Blood also, that God required as to offer redemption unto all men, and for the reconciling of the world unto Himself (2 Cor. 5:19).

## **THE THICKET**

The words thicket, pricks, and hedges all have a commonality of definition in both the Hebrew and Greek scriptures. An investigative word search results in a consistent thread regarding definition; to weave, to tightly intertwine, to fence in, to narrowly constrain or to screen in, to carefully shield. These definitions bring much unity and coalesce towards a networking of context that reflects a divine covering of protection. A uniquely prepared place by God is often in view. For example, Ex. 33:22– “And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cliff of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by.”

“I will put thee” “and will cover thee...” This verse exemplifies the overall definitive context of these three collective terms.

## **CAUGHT IN THE THICKET**

The event on Moriah reveals the thicket as that divinely prepared place. Christ, as the substitutionary sacrifice, was caught up in that pre-prepared place. Again, that designated thicket prepared before the foundation of the world was ever established (Rev. 13:8). In short, the ram represents the purpose of God in Christ as the savior of the world. The thicket represents the mission of Christ or the saving work of the Lamb of God. As the ram was caught in the thicket by his horns, Christ too was caught up in His heart, soul, and mind, with the spirit of the mission of God. The end purpose was a cross. The mission was the saving of the lost. To bring a renewed and personal spiritual fellowship between God and all men. Christ was intensely focused on the mission. In His own words, He would say, I must be about my father's business. I came to seek and save that which was lost. Luke 4:18 clearly describes His consuming passion to fulfill the mission of God:

18) The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. Jesus Christ was without debate, caught up in the thicket!

## **THROUGH THICKET AND THIN**

Jesus was so tightly interwoven in purpose and mission; one could say He had tunnel vision. He was never married. Subsequently, He had no earthly children, no house of His own, no properties, no vast business conglomerates associated with secular careers, no religious or even secular education from institutions of higher learning, nor associations with any academic culture of His day. He made no secular reputation for Himself nor secular image to maintain. He operated, however, with an unequalled passion to save lost souls and to do good to all men. He focused His entire mind towards God's cause. Again, He was caught up by His horns, as it were.

## **LORD BE A FENCE ALL AROUND ME EVERY DAY**

Moses was fenced in by God in Ex. 33:22, and as the ram was caught in the thicket of Genesis 22:13, we discover Saul enclosed by God in Acts 9:5, "And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Thank God for those prepared places designed and designated for a divine purpose!

## **THESE THINGS SHALL YOU DO!**

His purpose and His mission must become our passion. Jesus commanded, “And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel *them* to come in, that my house may be filled” (Luke 14:23).

Go to the hedges. Find the fences and get inside. Get hung up in the thicket of things! Consume yourselves with His burden, His vision, His purpose, His passions. The lost are in the thickets. We are in this world but not of it.

So commit yourself selflessly to the thicket as Christ did. Get caught up in your mind, your heart, your soul. Love God and thy neighbor with every ounce of spiritual energy you can possibly cultivate. Let the Heavenly Father also find you caught up in the thicket as Abraham found the ram when God chooses the more excellent sacrifice for His divine purpose. Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto Him. This is a reasonable service—a noble and reasonable mission when one understands their purpose.

Bind yourself to the thicket. Kicking against the pricks only distracts you from your purpose and delays the progress of the mission. I will give you all. If all is what you ask of me, I will not withhold. Get caught up in the thicket of a love for truth, doctrine, and evangelism. The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.

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