

OFFERING UP ISAAC

GOD MAKES A PROMISE

What joy and excitement Abraham must have felt at the age of seventy-five when the Lord began to speak to him some wonderful promises concerning his future.

Abraham, an old man by our standards, had no children. God began to tell him about all the things He would do for him and through him. "I will multiply your seed, and make of you a great nation." What a great promise!

I'm sure these words echoed through every corridor of his being during the years that followed. They were words of life upon which he had cause to hope. As the years passed I can see Abraham as his yearning heart reached out to God. "When shall these things be Lord?" Everything he was and lived for and dreamed of was embodied in that God breathed word he had heard.

ISHMAEL BROUGHT FORTH

After ten years of waiting, Sarah came up with a plan. How many times has our woman (soul-mind) taken a promise of God and tried to fulfill it by human effort? She would give her handmaid to Abraham and he could have a son by her. “After all, hasn’t it been ten years since we were first given the promise?” she no-doubt reasoned. And Sarah was now seventy-five and still barren.

The scripture doesn’t record the details of Sarah’s groaning and travail for a child, but I believe she no-doubt shed many tears and had many questions as to why God had not opened her womb.

Abraham did have a son by Hagar the bondwoman, but Ishmael was not the promised son. That which man brings forth from his own efforts and understanding will always produce Ishmael—that which is of the earth-earthy.

THE LONG WAIT

Thirteen more years pass and the Lord appears to Abraham at the age of ninety-nine. He confirms again the word He had given him twenty-four years before. By this time it was evident that in the due process of natural laws, Abraham's own body was dead and so was Sarah's womb (Romans 4:19).

We must come to the place in our walk with God, where we in our barren and impotent state, put ourselves completely in the hands of the One that has promised and know that He only can perform His word.

GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISE

When my children were young, and I made a promise to them, it was because I was sure that it was within my power and ability to perform my promise. I wouldn't have made a promise that was not in my power and ability to keep. Keeping the promise had nothing to do with my child's ability, but was based upon my knowledge of my ability to perform. So why do we think God would make a promise to us and then leave it up to us to fulfill that promise? Our

Heavenly father never makes a promise that He cannot keep. Sometimes men make promises that they can't keep. Unexpected things come up and they have to change their mind (repent). *But God is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent.* His promises are steadfast and sure. After twenty-five long years of waiting and believing the promise, Sarah brought forth Isaac, the promised son. He who had promised was faithful to fulfill that promise. Many times in our walk with the Lord the greatest trial is the test of time. I have often said "it's not the trials that I mind any more, it's the length of them that seems to get me".

OFFERING UP ISAAC

When Isaac was a lad (the scripture doesn't say how old) the Lord called to Abraham one day to take his son and offer him back to the Lord. Remember, Isaac was the fulfillment of a long awaited promise.

Now, you would think that the Lord would have asked Abraham to put Ishmael on the altar, since he was the result of the efforts of man. No,

it was not Ishmael that God was requiring. Some years before this time, Abraham had already met with his dealings about Ishmael, and he cried out, "Oh, that Ishmael might live in your sight." Isn't that the way we are? We go about to perform God's promises with our human efforts in our garments of sweat and then we cry, "Oh Lord bless that which we have brought forth." His answer is still, "Cast out the bondwoman and her son. He shall not be heir with the son of promise."

Now Abraham, take your only son Isaac. Take that which I have given you, that which you have long waited for, your hopes and dreams, take all that you are and ever hope to be, and walk up that hill and lay them all on the altar and give them back to me." The scripture says that Abraham staggered not at the promises of God, and in his heart he received Isaac back from the dead, in a figure, because he knew God would raise him up from the dead, if need be. He knew his God was a promise-keeper.

GIVING UP ISHMAEL

As we start our walk with the Lord, He begins to deal with every work of the flesh within us. First, the obvious outer sins of the flesh, and then the religious works of the law etc. But, we must understand that laying down our sins and pleasures on the altar is not offering our Isaac to God. That is our reasonable service. I've heard Christians talk about the sacrifices they have made to walk with God. I am not in any way scorning the sacrifices many have made in this walk, but I am amazed at what some people call sacrifice.

Too many times we hear an 'American Gospel' preached, not the Gospel of The Kingdom. This message must work for anyone, anywhere, at anytime.

WHAT IS YOUR ISAAC?

For over thirty years my husband and I have been walking with the Lord. Over the years we have received many prophetic words, many visions and dreams about the things God is going to do in us and through us. The refining fire of God has been performing His work and changing us day by day. We have seen some

things come to pass in our personal lives that were spoken of years before, but there are many more promises that God has made to us.

As our hearts yearned over the years for the fulfillment of those promises, we heard the Lord say, *“Walk up that hill with Abraham and lay down that which I have given you.”* He caused us to know that it was His promises and He would fulfill them in His time.

Every word of God is tried. It must go through a death, burial, and resurrection. Just about the time we think we have totally given our will to Him, we find hidden in the deep recesses of our heart, yet another area that the Lord searches out and puts His finger on. And then we must make a fresh new trip to that inner altar and lay even this at His feet. Many people think that ministry to the “House” and ministry to the Lord is the same thing, but it is not. When the Lord requires them to lay down their ministry to the House—that He might bring them to a greater more intimate place in Him—some preachers, worship-leaders, etc, actually fall away from walking with the Lord. I have seen some that sit on the church pew, lukewarm and

passive, because God required their ministry to be given back. The highest order of priesthood in the Old Testament was the Zadok Priesthood who ministered unto the Lord. But that seems so unnoticed and insignificant to most of us. We want to identify with the Lion of the Tribe of Judah not the Lamb of Calvary.

Has God given you a ministry of teaching, preaching or maybe a worship-leader? Perhaps you have many promises of how God is going to use you in that ministry. Many today, that feel called to these ministries would do well to take them to the altar and offer them back to God, and when He gives it back, it will be truly filled with resurrection life.

We have honestly come to the place in the last few years, that we both feel if it be the will of God that we never minister to another soul, He alone is enough. We have been somewhat reluctant to pick up again, that which we have given to Him, but at His word we will obey. Our hearts desire is that He alone may be glorified.

After all these years of rich revelation of His word to us, we have had a constant desire to

fellowship with others in the word. A sister asked us to hold some meetings at her church and the Lord released us to go. As I waited on the Lord day in and day out for three weeks, I felt like a child with nothing to share. Oh, I knew I could share about the goodness of God or different things the Lord had shown me over the years, but my heart cried out for that which was only His voice, only His word, only His life, nothing else matters. Not our ministry (of course, all ministry is His), not what others think of us, only that He is glorified in our lives. I understood a little more about what Jesus meant when He said, "Blessed are the poor in Spirit," when I asked the Lord if I had any life at all to share.

There are pastors who fight to keep their church or their position. They get angry with other pastors for 'stealing their sheep.' How is it possible to steal sheep unless we have disciplined men unto ourselves and not unto Christ? They are not our sheep, it's not our Kingdom, and it's not our ministry.

In Pentecost, we went where we wanted, said what we thought and worshiped where it seemed good to us. But we have come to

Tabernacles, and in this new place, it's all about,
"Not my will, but thine Lord." Amen.

Betty Houk