

Jehovah-Jireh

By now, if you had not already seen it, you are most likely observing that not only is God high above us and worthy of all worship (He is Yahweh, the Great "I AM"; Elohim, the One and only God, El Elyon, the Most High Sovereign; and Adonai, the Lord of lords); He is also intimately involved with His creation (He is El Roi, the God who sees; and He is El Shaddai, the All Sufficient One). It is difficult to get our minds wrapped around this apparent dichotomy. Isn't it interesting how most of the great Biblical realities that define our faith end up being unexplainable? Does it make any human sense that God is One in three and three in One? Does it seem at all rational that Jesus is 100% deity and 100% man? Or how about that God is sovereign and yet we humans are responsible for our actions, can we really make sense of that mystery to everyone's satisfaction? As a matter of fact when we attempt to explain such God given revelations we usually end up spouting heresies! And so it is with the amazing reality that God Most High invites us into an intimate relationship. But this is who He is. He cannot be any other way.

We all learn this in different ways. I grew up hearing "fire and brimstone" sermons Sunday after Sunday. The picture of God in my young impressionable mind was first and foremost one of anger and wrath. I had little interest in getting to know Him through faith or by any other means! The best thing to do in my mind was to try to think about something more pleasant during those hot sermons, while trying to keep my legs from falling asleep! It was not until years later that I began to hear something different. For instance, after one of many occasions of Israel's sinful obstinacy, God revealed His glory to Moses not with the expected characterization of anger and judgment but with intimate relational characteristics:

“Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.”” (Exodus 34:6–7)

God could have lead with judgment, but He didn't. Good thing, if God leads with judgment we would all have no hope. Don't get me wrong judgment is

there, but it's the last resort and not what pleases God as He reveals to a wayward Israel through Ezekiel:

““Say to them, ‘As I live!’ declares the Lord GOD, ‘I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?’” (Ezekiel 33:11)

Paul adds to this conversation by warning the self-righteous hypocrite:

“But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,” (Romans 2:3–5)

So, while we would never want to minimize the consequences of remaining under the penalty of sin or reduce the call to repentance, the point remains, God desires relationship first and foremost. This is why He has gone to such great and personal lengths to secure our salvation. Yet, we dare not take His longsuffering as license but instead to understand the heart of God, just as Peter reveals in light of the coming judgment:

“The Lord is not slow about His promise (of judgment), as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9)

So, when we come to Genesis 22 we come with the awareness of God's continuing revelation of Himself to Abraham and to us, the modern day readers of the Genesis stories. The incident out of which the name *Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord Provides*, rises is one of the most moving and significant in the Word of God. It is the story of the last and greatest crisis in the life of Abraham. Every event in his life has led up to this supreme hour from the time of his call to a high destiny, through every circumstantial change, through every joy, through every trial or failure, through every measure of success and blessing, through every hope and promise and assurance. All had been in preparation for this event. The great promise had been fulfilled, the supreme hope of his life realized. He had settled

down to live the rest of his life in peace and in joyous anticipation of the larger fulfillment of the promise through the centuries, and its final spiritual fulfillment.

In this story *Elohim* appears to Abraham with the astounding command to offer up as a sacrifice, a burnt offering, his only and well-beloved son Isaac.

Abraham, apparently, is not aware that this is a testing. His feelings can scarcely be imagined. His tremendous faith, in view of all the circumstances, is, perhaps, not sufficiently appreciated. The record reveals not a word of objection or hesitancy on his part. But if he laughed in his heart with joyful hope, even though perhaps mingled with a little doubt, when this son was promised to him, how deep his anguish and perplexity must have been at this amazing request from the God who had been so good to him. Yet the faith which enabled him to believe such a staggering promise in the first place is now sufficient for an even more staggering challenge.

As you read Genesis 22:1-19 consider how God chose to reveal Himself and Abraham's response. Could Abraham's apparent unflinching trust have to do with his maturing assurance that Elyon and his Adonai was truly his El Shaddai? Stop here and pray before you consider Abraham's great faith story, and ask Jehovah-Jireh to open your eyes to His provision.

Assignment

1. Read 22:1-19. What are your initial thoughts about this story? Does anything bother you? Stop and try and put yourself in Abraham's sandals. What would you have been saying to God? Why?

2. What was Abraham's response to God's instructions? (verse 3)

3. What does Abraham tell his men he is going to do? What belief did Abraham express? (verse 5)

4. What was Isaac's question (verse 7) and Abraham's answer (verse 8)? What does Abraham's answer reveal? Read Hebrews 11:17-19. What does the writer of Hebrews add to our understanding of Abraham?

5. What does Abraham name the place of sacrifice? If you have access to any study tools (bible dictionary, commentaries, etc.) look up Jehovah-Jireh. What did you learn?

6. What is God's response to Abraham's obedience? (verses 15-18) In the story we observe Abraham's obedience and worship along with God's provision. What does obedience, worship and God's provision have to do with one another?

7. It was not unusual for the cultures of Abraham's day to make human sacrifices. However, God used this occasion to introduce a very important concept: the substitution of an animal for a human. This substitutionary sacrifice picture would build through the rest of the Old Testament, climax in Isaiah 53, and become reality in the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. If you have time read Isaiah 53 and bow in worship to our Jehovah-Jireh for His ultimate loving provision for those who trust Him like Abraham did.

8. How is Jehovah-Jireh like a strong tower? How can the righteous run there and be safe? Recall some of the memorials in your life that point to the provision of the Lord. Now stop and thank Him for His loving-kindness. Will you let Him love you today? Is there any step of obedience that He has asked of you that you are struggling with? Is it because you doubt His provision? Perhaps this is the day for you to walk in obedience believing that God and his provision await you.