

INTRO: We are arranging the six midweek sermons of Lent, as well as Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, around a common, central theme: Christ as Substitute, i.e., Vicarious Atonement. (define) There are many 'substitute' examples, especially in the Old Testament. Our text is an example from Genesis.

I. THE LORD PROVIDES FOR HIMSELF THE LAMB, OFFERING

A. Isaac's existence is from the Lord

1. Abraham was 75 in Haran when God first promised him a great nation (12:7)
2. promise repeated at age 85; age 86 when Ishmael was born; 100 for Isaac
3. Ishmael is evidence of lapse in trust on the part of Abraham
4. God's order to offer Isaac; tests faith in 'descendent' promise
5. apparently doesn't tell Sarah; his own personal test

B. The ram is offered as a substitute for Isaac

1. built an altar; bound Isaac and laid him on the altar; placed the wood
2. stretched out his hand and took the knife
3. a serious scene; death is immanent
4. "Abraham, Abraham" double call = urgency; stop, the test's over
5. Abraham **then** saw the trapped ram, substituted it; how'd it get there; cf.v.14
6. so, the sacrifice was carried out, after all

C. Entire episode is a picture of Jesus as substitute

1. Isaac, though not sinless, is not under a capital crime verdict; obeys father
2. 'innocent' by our standards; but only Jesus was truly, **totally** innocent
3. this sermon is but a first in a series of Bible 'substitutes'; recurring theme!
4. few (Christian) denominations confess the 'vicarious atonement'; it is offensive, unfair; ignored or watered down in campground churches
5. LP UCC e.g.: fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man; whatever...
6. vicarious atonement in Bible is dramatic, and oft repeated

II. THE LORD HERE FORESHADOWS JESUS AS OFFERING FOR SIN

A. Where's Jesus (Waldo) in this text (Angel?)

1. Jesus said, "Search the scriptures, they testify of **Me**" (John 5:39)
2. v.11 – **the** Angel of the Lord told Abraham to stop the sacrifice
3. v.12 – you fear God...have not withheld your only son from **Me**

4. 'Angel' previously told Hagar "I will make of him a great nation"
5. BTW, **this** 'angel' promised (later, v.18) in your **Seed** all nations will be blessed because you have obeyed **My** voice
6. most see this 'angel/messenger' to be pre-incarnate Jesus
7. as per John 1: Word was with God, was God...became flesh and dwelt...

B. God's command to Abraham in this episode parallels the Father Himself

1. v.2 – take now your **son** (prophesied; born miraculously)
2. your **only** son; (not Ishmael) cp. John 3:16 God so loved...only begotten son...
3. 'Isaac' which means laughter; the joy of your life
4. whom you love (cp. Jesus' baptism, Transfiguration)

C. The location of this sacrifice

- 1... and go to the land of Moriah...I will show you...
2. re-named by Abraham 'the Lord will provide; (YHWH YIREH)
3. later, east side of Moriah is called 'Zion'
4. where Jerusalem, the city of David, was built
5. mountain where Jesus was offered as sacrifice, which the Lord provided

III. GOD SUBSTITUTES FAITH FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

A. For most people, the main point here is the faith of Abraham, not **substitution**

1. v.18 (later) " ...blessed because you have heeded My voice"
2. as before (15:6) ...believed and it was accounted to him as righteousness
3. concept quoted in New Testament by Paul (Rom.4:3 and Gal.3:6)...
- 4...and by Jesus' half-brother James (2:23)
5. faith accounted (**substituted!**) as righteousness is the Bible's main teaching (Sola fide)

B. But **saving** faith has the proper object, content

1. I can strongly and sincerely believe, and be totally wrong (pigs fly)
2. or, demons believe, admit Jesus is Son of God (albeit, not their savior)
3. v.8 "God will provide for Himself the lamb" (That's deep, Abraham!)
4. Heb.11:9 says Abraham believed God could raise the dead, if needed
5. all this teaches to trust God to provide **your** substitute for sin

C. Jesus is our Substitute!

1. don't need one? TEST: sell all you have...; shirt; turn cheek; hate brother
2. all tests which Jesus performed perfectly (Is.53 lamb before shearers is dumb)
3. Lent's purpose is to prepare us for Good Friday, and then Easter
4. God provided His Son, the Lamb of God, as sinners' substitute; the world's

CONCLUSION: Abraham substituted a ram instead of his son Isaac, as an offering to the Lord, a ram provided by God. God provided His Son Jesus as the substitute for the punishment of our sins. As you believe that, God regards that faith as righteousness, Jesus' righteousness, substituted for our sinfulness. Thanks, God, we got the picture. Amen.