

## 26. The Son that Abraham Sacrificed

*“How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your Word. With all my heart I have sought You; do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your Word I have treasured in my heart that I may not sin against You. Blessed are You, O LORD; teach me Your statutes. With my lips I have told of all the ordinances of Your mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches. I will meditate on Your precepts and regard Your ways. I shall delight in Your statutes; I shall not forget Your Word.” (Psalm 119:9-16 Emphasis added.)*

This text mirrors the authentic, Biblical heart attitude that God requires of true disciples of His living and written Word (See Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Matthew 5-7; 10). All of that was implied in the Lord’s command to Abram: *“I am God Almighty...walk before me and be blameless!”* (Genesis 17:1b) And Abraham responded accordingly. Without the attitude toward God’s living Word as expressed above, people give mere lip service to God. And that is always abhorrent to Him. He will have no regard for the ‘offerings’ of such people.

Countless other texts express the same loving obedient disciple attitude that the above psalm articulates. But to gain the authentic, Bible-based understanding of what such texts require, we must gain a good understanding of God’s Eternal Blood Covenant ways and what they reveal about His nature and attitude toward us. The better we understand God’s nature, the better we can understand what is correspondingly required of His image and likeness humans. And that will help us understand more of what disciple life is all about.

By His Eternal Covenant, God pledged to be and to supply everything Creation needs to fulfill its purpose and destiny. And He is continually fulfilling His pledge. There’s no greater love slave or servant in existence than our God. He perpetually maintains and serves each one of His creatures. In agricultural terms, we might say that He owns and runs the largest ‘farm’ imaginable – the entire universe. Only He comprehends its scope and knows exactly what every aspect of it needs. Only God in His infinite Perfection can understand and tend and manage it properly. He creates and sustains the life and nature of every one of His countless creatures. He gives each one a specific purpose and feeds and waters and sees to its well being and success. And He never takes a break or vacation. He is always ‘*on duty*’ for us, supplying every heartbeat, brain wave and breath we must have.

He does all this through His living Word. The Word is God’s chief, ultimate Servant and also the chief Servant and Provider for all of His Creation. He oversees and manages His Father’s ‘Farm’...making sure it runs properly and fulfills Father’s purposes. That is why God’s Word is the Supreme Lord of all. He is the Greatest in God’s Kingdom, not just because He has all Authority in Heaven and on Earth; but because He selflessly serves more than all the others combined!

*“Sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, “If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.” (Mark 9:35)*

*“...whoever keeps His Word; in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.” (1 John 2:5-6)*

Through the two Adams, God is the Blood Covenant friend of the entire human race. The First Adam was created out of dust. In his weakness, he fell and failed. But even though Adam and Eve violated the Covenant and dragged us all into Sin and Death, God remained ever faithful to His Covenant friends. He sent His Word (the Last Adam) to redeem and restore us. He is the Greatest Servant of all. He came after the humans, to cover and atone for them and to restore them to their original image and likeness of God perfection. So the more disciples transform into the image and likeness of the Greatest Servant of all, the more He is able to continue to love, serve and sacrifice on behalf of God’s Creation. He will do it through the obedient flesh and life of each disciple. The Lord and His true disciples thus work together, as one, serving Father’s domain...for Father’s sake. God’s commandments to us reveal what His Word is ready, willing and able to do to obey those commandments from within us:

*“But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” (Luke 6:35-36)*

*“You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.” (Matthew 4:43-45 Emphases added.)*

*“Someone said to Him, ‘Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You.’ But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, ‘Who is My mother and who are My brothers?’ And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, “Behold My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.” (Matthew 12:47-50 Emphasis added.)*

God has the greatest ‘servant heart’ of all. And His image and likeness, the Eternal Word, is the perfect embodiment of His Father’s heart. So, of course, the Word’s image and likeness disciples must be trained to transform into the image and likeness of their Master, who loves all men wholeheartedly, without discrimination. Biblical obedience to God’s Word is what allows God’s Word to transform His disciples into His own image and likeness. Our Master obeys His Father to perfection. There isn’t a speck of radical independence in Him; no self-life at all! Everything He does is an act of obedient love service to His Father. So as His image and likeness disciples identify with Him and obey His directives, His obedience to His Father becomes their obedience too. That is why the Holy Spirit is given to disciples. He empowers and enables them supernaturally, to be able to embody God’s living Word and to do everything as one with Him and from Him.

As the Last Adam, our Master came to die our death to atone fully for all of us and satisfy God's perfect Justice, perfectly. But He also came to lead us decapitated, disobedient, fallen humans into our own death. We must die to our original rebellious, God-ignoring Adamic life, so that we can begin to share in our Master's Eternal, Resurrection Life. This is the enormous Exodus transition upon which the Lord must lead us. He has to take us out from under the death sentence imposed by the First Adam's violation of our Covenant with God and baptize us into the death of His innocent, Sin-less, redeeming Word. The death of the Last Adam has the Covenant authority to kill our death and strip its condemnation off of us. And the physical death of our original bodies removes every last speck and trace of Sin, guilt and unworthiness from us. The Word became human so that He could legally represent us in God's Covenant as the Perfect Sacrificial Lamb of God. His death freed us from the guilt, condemnation, shame and death we deserved. But residue from our original Sin-corruption remains in our mortal flesh as we live out this life. That residue always tries to rise up and take over again and so it must continually be resisted and 'crucified' and disabled on a daily basis.

### **No Other Way to be Saved**

We must deliberately forsake and overcome those recurring rebellious urges that rise up within us. If we do, the Cross uproots and removes their influences continually. So, even as the Holy Spirit is filling us with the Resurrection Life of our Master, He is also emptying us of the traces of living death that our fallen flesh continues to regenerate. So we are being filled and emptied and made righteous and being purified all at the same time. God empties us of the traces of the First Adam's life and fills us with the Resurrection Life of the Second Adam. And after our temporary bodies breathe their last and this temporal life on Earth runs its course, God will give our regenerated spirits new, eternal, incorruptible glorified bodies in which to abide. And our Exodus will be over because our restoration will be complete. There is no other way we can be saved. So we must understand this and avoid making the mistake the disciple Peter made in the early days of his training:

*"From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.' But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's.'*

*"Then Jesus said... 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS.'"* (Matthew 16:21-27)

God's Word is a living, eternal 'Laser Beam' of Obedience...always doing His Father's will. He renders Eternal Covenant Loyalty both to His Father and to us. He executes and fulfills God's Eternal Covenant to perfection. We seldom understand the enormity of all He has to do to fulfill God's Covenant promises to all of Creation. He has to operate at levels and depths we can't even imagine. That's why He requires our trust. We must rest in Him and His infinite wisdom and

perfection, knowing that God is dealing with things and issues we know nothing about and is always operating according to His perfect infinite, incomprehensible nature, out of His perfect righteousness, wisdom and timing. No creature will ever be able to accuse God of wrong doing.

The First Adam, understandably, was not able to represent us with perfect faithfulness. So God's Word, the Last Adam, came to the rescue. He is committed by God's Eternal Covenant Promises, to stand by Adam and the rest of us, to defend and restore us, no matter what it costs...even if it kills Him! And that is exactly what had to happen. He had to die our Death, so that by the Authority of His Sin-less Righteousness, it could be stripped off of us and we could be set free from it. This is behind what God reveals to every son and daughter of fallen Adam, through the prophet Isaiah:

*“Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen that you may live; and I will make an everlasting Covenant with you, according to the faithful mercies shown to David (My living Word who became Abraham's Seed and David's Royal Descendant). Behold (descendants of Jacob); I have made Him a witness to the peoples (Gentiles), a Leader and Commander for the peoples (Gentiles). Behold, you will call a nation you do not know, and a nation which knows you not will run to you, because of the LORD your God, even the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified you.”*

*“Seek the (Word of the) LORD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his (disobedient) way and the unrighteous man his (decapitated) thoughts; and let him return to the (Word of the) LORD, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My (Blood Covenant) thoughts are not your (self-serving) thoughts, nor are your (Covenant-breaking) ways My (Covenant-keeping) ways,” declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so will My Word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the (Covenant fulfilling) matter for which I sent it.” (Isaiah 55:3-11 Emphasis and amplification added.)*

God's Last Adam willingly surrendered His human life to atone and pay the First Adam's death penalty and that of his descendants. And because He rose from the dead, those who identify with Him and die to their own self-life according to God's Blood Covenant terms will also rise with Him. So, whatever happens to our Representative, (whether it is the first Adam, or the Last) also happens to every person they represent.

This is what our Exodus is about. We're moving from one level of humanity to another, from one Covenant Representative to Another. The Son of God and the Son of Man is the same Person...God's living Word. He is God's Representative and He is also our Representative, the Last Adam. That's why we must choose Him over the First Adam. We can't be represented by both. We will be under one or the other.

## **Yeshua, the Same Yesterday, Today and Forever**

Earlier generations knew God's living Word in various ways and at various levels before He came as Israel's Messiah. For example, His Chosen People knew Him as *'The Shekinah'*, the Light of God's manifest Presence. And others, like Philo of Alexandria, called Him *'The Logos.'* And still others knew Him by the name Jewish sages gave Him in mystical kabalistic writings – *'Metatron.'* These are some of the ways by which the appearances and interactions of God's living Word were identified. And, as long as the people to whom He appeared believed and obeyed what He told them to do, He covered them and transplanted them into God's Eternal Covenant Ground.

But today, the Word's disciples have the benefit of Biblical hindsight. We know more of the progressive unfolding of the mystery of God's Salvation Story than previous generations did:

*"Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the Word of God, that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ (Messiah) in you, the hope of glory." (Colossians 1:25-27 Emphasis added.)*

We know God's living Word in His latest, most perfect revelation. The Word became one of us and appeared as – Yeshua (Jesus), the Messiah of Israel and Redeemer of the World'. Now we know that He reigns in Resurrection Glory as Lord of the entire universe and Mankind's Eternal High Priest. But when the Word finally did appear as Yeshua the Messiah, He was not anything new. Nor did He come to do or start anything new or different. His coming was not a radical departure or deviation from what He had done before, with Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses and the nation of Israel, as God's living Word. Yeshua is the same living Word of God that appeared throughout the Torah, in Genesis and beyond. He appeared to previous generations of His Israelite disciples. So as Messiah Yeshua, God's living Word came to confirm, protect, validate and restore God's Creation to what God had intended it to be from the very beginning.

*"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:17-20)*

Genesis and the rest of the Torah and all the other books reveal the same, unchanging mission: the restoration of the fallen, disobedient human race. That is what the prophets, wisdom writers and Yeshua's apostles universally endorsed and chronicled and explained. It is the never-changing Love Story of God, through His living Word and Holy Spirit, reaching out to reconcile with the human race. It is the account of how God constantly fulfills His Eternal Covenant pledge to all of His human creations that live and move and breathe. We all have our being in and by and because of God's eternal Living Word. And the Target to which God's Word

continues to lead us is the original Target to which He intended to restore and redirect fallen Adam and Eve when He came to cover their disobedient, Sin-damaged nakedness in the Garden in Genesis 3.

### ***Restored to God's Original Design***

The Word has done everything necessary to restore and take us all to our true God-intended eternal destiny – His image and likeness. So our Exodus is a departure from living death and an entry into eternal Life... a departure from the Word-rejecting world system and entry to the Kingdom of Heaven, where the Word is Absolute Lord and King. Our Exodus is a departure from the Sin-corrupted humanity of the First Adam and the reception and takeover of the new Spirit-filled perfection of The Last Adam's Humanity. The story takes us full circle, bringing us back to the original image and likeness of God humanity. We are saved in order to be restored to the fulfillment of our original purpose. There is no other way or destination for us but the original one God spoke into existence in the beginning. Once God speaks... His Word endures forever. It cannot be changed or stopped. All will be done just as God has said.

This is what God was revealing... again... when He first sent His living Word to Abram. Abraham and his descendants were commissioned to begin to do with God's living Word, what Adam and Eve refused to do... ***obey, serve and live as one with Him.*** Abram began with the great disadvantage of having inherited Adam's fallen, Sin-corrupted human nature and a mortal body. He was a Sin-corrupted product of the Serpent's decapitated world system. All he knew was idolatry. That is why God had to begin by separating him and his entire household from the Sin-full world. He had to uproot them from the world of Sin and uproot every trace of Sin that remained in their hearts and souls from them. He had to teach Abram to crucify the self-life in his flesh... so that he could follow His Lord and Master into the Promised Land of His eternal Resurrection, regardless of the cost:

*“Now the LORD said to Abram, ‘Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your Father’s house, to the land which I will show you...’ (Genesis 12:1)*

Abram was a fallen descendant of Adam – conceived in, born into and conditioned by and for radical independence from God. Sin-corruption was in his genes and it operated all around him. The Serpent manipulated him through his original idolatry. So that is where God had to begin. A total Exodus from the fallen world and separation from its system had to be the starting point.

God loved and accepted Abram and his family just as they were. They were His Covenant friends, through Adam. But now, to save them, God introduced and linked them to His living Word, The Last Adam. So God's Holy Spirit made the Word so real to Abram that the Word was able to pierce, penetrate and impregnate his innermost being. The Life of God's Word began to abide in and shine forth from Abram. And He established His Lordship and was enthroned Supreme Lord over Abram's heart and soul and mind and will. And this new Covenant relationship with God's Word became the Root into which the Word would engraft all of His future disciples. God included Abram and his family in what His Word had to do to redeem and restore the rest of the human race (See John 3).

After He included Abraham into God's Eternal Covenant, The Last Adam had a 'point of entry' and a 'base of operations' on Earth from which to begin and expand His work of Salvation. Through Abraham, the Lord began to reach out to the rest of the fallen world and progressively take back everything the Serpent has stolen from God's Kingdom.

### ***God Requires and Promises What Is Impossible to Us***

Most of us do not realize the depths of the damage that Sin did to us. It killed our image and likeness of God humanity. As soon as Adam disobeyed God's Word we all died! When God said, '*you will surely die*,' He really meant it! Thereafter, union and fellowship with Him and His Kingdom were impossible to us. We were no longer able to fulfill God's righteous standards or embody His Presence. And yet God's perfect nature and standards and plan for Creation never change! That's why we must understand what God revealed in Genesis and Exodus. When Adam disobeyed God's Word, he severed himself and the rest of us, from our spiritual Life Source and His Plan for Creation. Instantly the corruption of Death invaded all human flesh and the world in which it abides. That is the world we inherited. And although our physical death manifests itself gradually, death is in us, nevertheless. And the dead cannot serve as God's image and likeness! We are not what God created originally. Sin caused us to become deviant, mutated casualties. The Serpent's Sin-full radical independence from God is now in our fallen nature. That's why we begin to die from the moment of our conception! And our Master was sent to save us from ourselves, from what we have become. So we must willingly die to our original innate state of living death and make complete that Exodus before our mortal flesh breathes its last and we find ourselves in eternity!

Dead branches can't bear the living produce of a living vine. Nor can we bear the fruit of God's eternal Life in us without being redeemed from our death sentence and reunited to God's living Word. In our original state we can do nothing that is living, pure or righteous. We can't mirror God's perfect presence and nature or meet His perfect standards of Righteousness. Nor can we do anything to improve, save, redeem, or justify ourselves. We're dead to being able to produce anything that is alive!

That's why our Eternal Covenant Representative, The Last Adam, had to come to our rescue...to be and do everything God's perfection requires of us. He had to do it in our place and in our name! This is the glory and wonder of God's Blood Covenant and how it works, and why. It is a revelation of God's Word, The Chief Servant of all Creation, and why He must tend to all of our individual and corporate needs, ceaselessly, eternally, as our Eternal Covenant Representative. And that is why He must be everything to us...at all times, and on every level, as long as we are still in this life, in this fallen world.

Despite this glaring and obvious Truth, it is excruciatingly difficult for us to understand and learn the requirements of God's Covenant, and live accordingly. We're used to relying on ourselves and on other creatures like us, 100% of the time for 100% of what we need to be and to do. So to reverse that equation is the hardest thing for decapitated, self-centered, controlling people to learn and do. It takes intense, relentless discipline, drill and repetitive training to learn to trust 100% in God's finished work, and 0% in anything else. We can only make the transition from total radical independence, to the peace-filled Sabbath Rest, after we're trained to trust, rely upon and rest in the perfect, finished work that the Last Adam has already done in our name.

When that happens, they can learn to draw continually from the benefits of God's Perfect Finished Work that await us in Heaven...so that they can be transmitted by the Holy Spirit to us on Earth. God has been revealing this same Truth from the very beginning...starting in Genesis. And still, to this day, most of the world has no clue that this is the way it really is:

*“Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.” (Genesis 2:1-3)*

This above text is proclaiming God's consummate Eternal Perfection, Wisdom, Foreknowledge and complete Provision for His created universe. God got it right the first time. He did a perfect job of providing everything we would ever need in space and time, whether it would concern our past, our present, or our future. Everything was and is present in God's eternal nature, heart, will and purpose. Everything that takes place in human history was already known and provided for in the Beginning. The fruit of it waits to be applied to us through our faith and trust in God. He will transmit it from Heaven to Earth as the need for it arises in our space and time dimension. God is our Perfect, All-Sufficient God! There is no other god nor is there a need for any other. The living God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, is the only true God. And through His Word, He is everything any creature needs to fulfill its purpose and destiny.

This is an excruciatingly hard revelation for us to grasp and embrace as airtight Truth. Our fallen Sin-corrupted nature is extremely limited in perception and understanding. Moreover we're wired to be selfish, self-centered, rebellious, manipulative, controlling, predatory and self-destructive to the core. So the only remedy is for us to die completely to our habitual reliance on that original life and nature we inherit from conception. In other words we must die to our instinctual, habitual radical independence from God. Salvation consists in making the exchange of our first life for the Resurrection Life of God's Son. And after He becomes our Life, we must allow ourselves to be retrained and reconditioned to live as one with God's Word, relying and depending on Him...the Last Adam...for everything, at all times.

This disciple training must be ongoing because the residue of Sin-corruption still lurks in all mortal flesh. The residue makes us keep tending to revert again to our former radical independence...to rise up again and take over and *'be as God.'* We must crucify that urge daily...until God is able to take us all the way across the 'Finish Line' of our present life on Earth. The ultimate death of our mortal flesh will then completely free us of every speck of Sin once and for all. And our Resurrection Triumph with our risen Head will be complete, perfect and eternal.

Abraham had to learn to make this enormous transition...as did Isaac...and Jacob...and all true Israelites. And the rest of the world will have to follow suit. In Abraham's case, we can see that his 'fallen flesh' kept rising up, trying to take over at various times. And God disciplined, taught and trained him to deny his self-life, and remain rooted in the new Life that comes from living in and from His Word at all times.

### ***Authentic Disciple Training Includes Testing of our Commitment***

After years of training, the Lord had Abraham ready for the ultimate test that would prove the authenticity of his discipleship. He was well over a hundred years old when the ultimate Covenant test was given. His training hadn't started until he was seventy five years old. That's when God's Word began to make these seemingly impossible promises. *'I will make you a great nation' ... 'in you all the families of the earth will be blessed' ... 'to your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river...Euphrates' ... 'I have made you the father of a multitude of nations' ... 'I will bless her (90 year old Sarai) and indeed I will give you a son by her...I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her...'*

God's living Word patiently, relentlessly trained Abraham to believe, rely upon and rest in Him and His promises. It was excruciating for such an elderly couple to grasp and believe this. They'd been idolaters all their lives! They knew nothing about 'Rest' because they had not known the real, living God. Now they had to learn to trust and believe in Him alone...100% of the time! They learned the hard way, that this living God is utterly perfect and that everything they would ever need in the future was already there for them and for everyone else...in Him!

*"But as for you, go your way to the end; then you will enter into rest and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age."* (Daniel 12:13)

"For He has said somewhere concerning the seventh *day*: 'AND GOD RESTED ON THE SEVENTH DAY FROM ALL HIS WORKS'; and again in this *passage*, "THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST." Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience, He again fixes a certain day, 'Today,' saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, 'TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS!'" (Hebrews 4:4-7)

learned to abide with God in the Perfection of His Rest. And finally, God fulfilled the promise upon which all the other promises depended – He gave Isaac to him and Sarah. Abraham was 100 years old when 90 year old Sarah bore Isaac, God's child of promise. So note this well: naturally speaking, it was impossible for them to conceive a child. But now, finally, there he was...Isaac...standing and living before their awe-struck eyes!

So, after that, it would have been understandable if Abraham had begun to assume that when it came to knowing all about God, he had arrived. He was the resident 'expert' when it came to knowing God. Was he not now relishing the elation of seeing Isaac grow and mature into a vibrant young man...so full of promise? Now he knew God as the '*Doer of the Impossible*', and the '*God that keeps His Covenant Promises*'. He had living proof in Isaac, that he and God were very, very close friends.

But God had to take Abraham's training much deeper. He knew what was in Abraham's flesh. He knew that selfish, self-centered, arrogant pride and ego-adoring instincts continue to try to regenerate and take over again. He knew Abraham's self-life and that of the rest of us needs to be continually pruned...all the way back to the nub. God has to make room in all of us for the

next seasons of fresh growth and productivity in His Plan that must yet appear. So, in keeping with what God's living Word says to all of His disciples...just when Abraham would have been tempted to assume he was finished and had arrived...God gave him a major pruning:

*"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit."* (John 15:1-2 Emphasis added.)

If the pruning doesn't happen, the next season's fruit-bearing process is greatly diminished and perhaps prevented altogether. So this is what God did for His beloved friend Abraham:

*"Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, 'Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' He said, 'Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you."* (Genesis 22:1-2 Emphasis added.)

Human sacrifice in Abraham's era and region was commonplace. Many false religions were offering human sacrifices to false gods all around Abraham. So it was not as much of a shock to him as it would be to us. But Isaac was the fruit of God's Covenant promises and living proof of God's Eternal Perfection, Integrity, Holiness and Faithful Lovingkindness! How could God now go back on that and renege on what He had sworn by Blood Oath to impart? And how could Abraham continue to trust and rest and rely upon God with airtight, 100% trust, now that it seemed as if God was suddenly veering off the Covenant road and violating Abraham's expectations and assumptions by taking this unexpected new direction?

### ***Our ideas about God are not God – He's so Much More!***

It was bad enough when God required Abraham to give up his first son, Ishmael. At least that was understandable. Ishmael was a child of his fallen flesh. But why was God requiring Abraham to sacrifice the real child of promise? This was impossible to comprehend. But that's the point. You can never know all there is to know about God. No matter how much you learn, there is always more to learn. So our current best ideas of God will always fall far short of His living Reality. Our ideas about God...are not God! They are very limited, puny created things. But the Sin residue in our flesh tries to deceive us into believing that our idea of God actually is God. And if we fall for that trap, we can easily separate from the real God when and if He fails to meet our expectations. Then we may reject Him and turn to our created ideas instead. We will worship them and become idolaters. When that happens, we disconnect from Reality and that residue of Sin and Death begin to take over again.

When one season of growth and fruitfulness with God ends, then what was previously green, lush and fruitful, turns into dead, dry underbrush. So it must be 'pruned' away to make room for what the next season will bring. Our time-honored knowledge of God must die when it becomes old and irrelevant and insufficient for what is yet to come. So God begins to prepare us for the next fresh new revelation of Himself that we will need in order to be equipped and prepared for what He knows lies ahead of us. What we knew and what worked in the past will be insufficient in the future. So we need to know more about our God. That's why He clears away what is old, to make way for what is about to reveal to us now.

This is what Abraham's Divine Covenant Friend did for him. The exchange of tunics during blood covenant ceremonies means: *'From this day forward, everything I am and have and own is also yours...whenever you have need of it all you have to do is ask...and it is yours!'* So it was time for a mutual test of God and of Abraham. This is what Genesis 22 reveals. Was Abraham **really** God's Blood Covenant friend? Had he **really** given God his tunic and his belt? And what about God, would He prove to be all that He had promised to Abraham? How much of their tunics and belts had they really given to each other? And how much of their promises would they really be willing to fulfill?

Even when we don't want it to happen, from deep within us, thoughts of pride, selfishness, arrogance, self-righteousness and fear and insecurity well up from deep within us. We get nagging doubts concerning God's ability and faithfulness. Then the more insecure we feel, the more a lust for control arises within us...prompting us to usurp what belongs only to God. We feel driven to try to meet our own needs and control things to insure our personal glory and security. So, just as a periodic excess of leaves appears on vine branches and need to be pruned back regularly to make room for the next season's fruit yield, so is it with disciples. That Sin-residue that keeps oozing out of us needs to be crucified regularly. Room must be made in us for the continuing fruit-production of God's living Word. If we're going to be His image and likeness, nothing can be allowed to stand between us and get in His way. Nothing can be allowed to obstruct, diminish or abort the revelation of His Life and activity within us. He must be everything to us. He must increase, and everything else about us must decrease until He is our entire Life, our All...in all things...at all times.

*"...work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for IT IS GOD who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."* (Philippians 2:12b-13 Emphasis added.)

It was time for God to show Abraham that Isaac was a true child of promise. But he was not the Ultimate Child of His Promise. All this time, God had another Son of Abraham in mind...the Son that would be the Ultimate Seed of Abraham, who would come much later...The Lamb of God would be the true 'Child of Promise.' Isaac would not have the authority or power to save the world. The living Word of God was the only one capable of that. So He would have to be the Ultimate Sacrifice that would do it perfectly.

*"Jesus answered, 'If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, 'He is our God'; and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His Word. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.' So the Jews said to Him, 'You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?' Jesus said to them, **“Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM!”**"* (John 8:54-58 Emphasis added.)

God used this enormous 'test' to prune Abraham's flesh. He was naturally assuming that everything was about Isaac. But it wasn't. It only indirectly concerned Isaac. All along, God had one of Isaac's descendants – Yeshua – in mind. He too would be a Son of Abraham – his Ultimate Son. So God was asking Abraham to join Him in offering their mutual Son, Yeshua, the Lamb of God, on behalf of the human race. He was going to be that Son...the Son of Man. God

and Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob...the Covenant friends... would all together be required to offer this mutual Son of theirs, so God would be able to fulfill the Covenant He had made with Himself in eternity past, before the foundation of the world.

*“And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”* (Genesis 12:3)

### **So What Can We Learn From This Test?**

To understand the underlying issue of any Blood Covenant God shares with humans, we must always keep Genesis 1-3 in mind. Humans are made to be the image and likeness of God’s living Word. That means the Word and His human image are to be and do everything as one integrated unit. The Word initiates and the disciple follows (obeys). To destroy that union and wipe out the human race, the Serpent creates the smoke of mental and emotional confusion in our minds, as he did with Eve when he got her to pull away from God’s Word and disobey Him:

*“Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’’ The woman said to the serpent, ‘From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.’” The serpent said to the woman, “You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.”* (Genesis 3:1-6)

This is the ploy the Serpent always uses to sever us from our rightful spiritual Head, the Word of God. He gets you to put your faith in how you see things and how you think and feel about them, especially when God’s Word doesn’t align with your impressions. And so the Serpent inserts into any human mind that is careless, a deadly virus that contains:

- The wedge of doubt concerning God’s credibility
- The wedge of mistrust concerning God’s abilities
- The wedge of suspicion concerning God’s motives toward us
- In computer terms, the demonic virus causes our hearts to separate from and bypass the Word’s revelations and commands. In His place, it substitutes your own limited perceptions and independent thinking. That self-direction becomes your default operating system and your ultimate source of wisdom and direction.
- As long as we mistrust God’s wisdom, character and judgment, we disbelieve Him and therefore disobey the authority of His Word. And that ‘decapitates’ and kills us.

Abraham naturally wrestled and struggled with this temptation. He never expected God to require Isaac’s death. It would have been natural for him to ‘second guess’ God, and doubt what he heard. It would have been easy to assume it was the Serpent, trying to deceive him. It is so natural and easy for us to favor our very limited perceptions and viewpoints...to consider our seemingly impossible circumstances...to be influenced by what the world around us is saying...to refer to our own past experiences...and consult our opinions, feelings, natural urges and heartfelt desires. And whenever God’s Word conflicts with those personal considerations of

ours, and doesn't 'make sense' to us...we easily begin to criticize what God said, or 'edit' it and come up with theologies that explain it away or...we simply rebel against it. We do all those things instead of simply accepting the authority of God and 'following orders' when we know God has clearly revealed and commanded something in His Word. At such times, we too are put to the test. And we are forced to 'look under our own hoods' to see where our hearts really are and what it really is that we stand for and truly believe and trust in.

But God's Covenant friend Abraham trusted God with airtight 100% faith...no matter what it cost. He stood his Covenant ground and gave God what He thought He was asking. And then God revealed what He really had in mind and who the True Sacrifice would actually have to be:

*"But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the LORD (centuries from now) it will be provided." (Genesis 22:11-14)*

God had 'exchanged' tunics and belts with Abraham, through His living Word. The Word was God's Representative. He was also Abraham's Representative. Thus the Word of God is Everything and does Everything. He perfectly links God to mankind and vice versa. And so although Abraham willingly offered what he thought God was asking...in order for everything to be done perfectly, God's own Son, the Word, was actually the one that would have to be sacrificed. Abraham gave his tunic and belt to God, as required. And God gave Abraham His Tunic and Belt as promised. And the living Word of God revealed that because He was a Son to both God and to Abraham, He was the one designated to step forward to offer Himself in place of Isaac. This was symbolized by the ram that Abraham was suddenly able to notice.

Isaac was Abraham's son with Sarah. But Yeshua was Abraham's Son with God, through the Eternal Covenant! And because Abraham believed, trusted and obeyed, He was pruned and prepared to receive a fresh new revelation of God's living Word, and through him, the Word kept going and took Abraham with Him into a fresh new season of spiritual Fruit-bearing that continues to this day:

*"Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son (Isaac), indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your Seed (Yeshua) as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your Seed (Yeshua) shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your Seed (Yeshua the Messiah) all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." (Genesis 22:15-18)*

In our Eternal Covenant with God, everything must be done by our Ultimate Representative, God's living Word. Since we sinned and died, only He can be our Atonement. Only He can be

our Obedience. Only He can produce the Fruit worthy of the Father's Glory. So God's Word must be everything to us; our Life, our indwelling Lord and our obedient faith. Only He obeys God perfectly. And when He lives and reigns over our heart and soul and innermost being, He does in us what we could never do by our own natural efforts. When a vine operates from within its branches, the branches bear the fruit that only the vine can produce. And when the Lord Himself operates from within us, we accomplish the impossible, even though personally, all we're doing is looking to Him, drawing from Him and resting and receiving the fruits of His utterly perfect finished, eternal Work. This is the glory that the Holy Spirit transmits from eternity...into our innermost being and our time and space circumstances.

### ***The Vital Issue Revealed Throughout the Bible***

Eve's response to the Serpent in Genesis 3 led to total disaster – for her and Adam and the whole human race. But Abraham's determination to remain focused on and rooted in God's living Word, with all his heart, soul and strength even though he thought God was requiring him to sacrifice his beloved Isaac, enabled God to continue His Rescue Mission on our behalf. Abraham's obedient faith was enormously beneficial, fruitful and redemptive. His obedience to God's Word, no matter what it seemed to cost, enabled the Word to continue to work in and through him...on behalf of us all.

Every human event and situation reveals more aspects of the same ongoing war between God's Word and the Serpent and the races that serve each one. If we remain connected to God's Word as our Head, He will continue to do His work in and for and through us. But if we mistrust and disobey Him and take matters into our own hands, the Serpent will succeed in separating us from our Life Source. The whole Bible reveals this ongoing struggle. It's always about remaining connected to our Head, or allowing ourselves to be decapitated. Eve and Adam were decapitated. But Abraham remained faithful, obedient, and therefore, connected...even when it almost killed him to do it. So what the prophet Isaiah urges us all to do, Abraham actually did:

*“A voice is calling, ‘Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. Let every valley be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; and let the rough ground become a plain, and the rugged terrain a broad valley; then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all flesh will see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”*

*“A voice says, ‘Call out.’ Then he answered, ‘What shall I call out?’ ‘All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.” (Isaiah 40:3-8 Emphasis added.)*

Abraham couldn't have known it at the time, but his willingness to sacrifice His precious Isaac was actually a revelation of God's willingness to sacrifice His living Word...Messiah Yeshua. It also revealed God's 'Disciple-training Pattern.' The Word leads His own into His redeeming Death...and they emerge with Him on the other side of that 'birth canal'...free and clear of self-life and eternally triumphant in His Eternal Life. He leads...and His obedient disciples follow. We see this pattern repeated throughout the Bible with one generation of disciples after another. We saw it with Abel...and Noah...and Enoch and Abraham. Now look for it throughout the rest

of the Bible. And realize that it must be our pattern too. God will work that same pattern into your life. So as you lay your precious 'Isaacs' on the altar before God, through your faithful obedience, expect Him to continue to reveal His Son to the world that is all around you, through you, in all of His Glory. What we try to come up with on Earth by our own independent devices will not 'do the job'. So we must die to trying to run our own lives and learn to draw from what our Master has waiting for us on the Eternal, Resurrection side of His Cross. So, paradoxically, the hardest 'job' disciples have to do...is to learn how to REST!