

Visit by God – Isaac's birth

The testing of Abraham



Genesis 18 : 1-16; 21 : 1-8; 22

6

Messengers of God came to Abraham and strengthened his faith and that of his wife Sarah. The three men promised them anew that Sarah would soon give birth to a son. A year later this godly promise was fulfilled. Their son was given the name Isaac which means: son of laughter. The birth of Isaac was promised to Abraham on three different occasions. But God tested Abraham very severely once more. He asked him to sacrifice his only son. Abraham had to prove that he loved God more than his own son. Abraham passed the difficult test in that he obeyed God and trusted him. God himself prevented Isaac's death.

The children learn that God keeps his promises. If we trust and obey God always we shall be richly blessed.
God is close to his own (those who believe in him).

Abraham is resting in the shade of some trees in front of his tent during the heat of the afternoon. He sees three men approaching on the dusty road. Quickly he runs to meet them. He thinks: "They will surely want to rest here and refresh themselves before going further." When Abraham reaches them, he bows low and says: "Lord, do not pass your servant by. Some water can be brought to wash your feet. Rest yourselves under the tree. I will fetch a little bread for you. Afterwards you can travel further." They answered: "Do what you have just said." The three men sit down in the shade of a tree. Abraham quickly runs into the tent and tells Sarah to bake some cake (bread). He himself chooses the best calf and instructs his servant to slaughter and roast it. While the guests are eating, they ask: "Where is your wife Sarah?" Abraham answers: "Over there in the tent." The guest then says: "In one year from now I will return and your wife will have a child." Abraham is filled with great joy. He feels that God wishes to strengthen his faith. Sarah has also heard the words of the Lord. But she laughs inwardly and thinks: "Surely that is quite impossible." She gets a terrible fright, however, when the same voice asks: "Why does Sarah laugh? Is anything

impossible for God?" Sarah denies that she laughed, but from God nothing can be hidden. "But you did laugh."

The guests now get up and Abraham accompanies them some distance. They continue on the road to Sodom and Gomorrah. Sarah remains behind. She feels ashamed. She knows very well that nothing is impossible for God. She has now personally heard the promise of the Lord. Her heart becomes filled with peace and joy. She can now believe that the promise will be fulfilled.

A year after the three men visited Abraham, the great miracle happened: Abraham and Sarah had a son. God had fulfilled his promise. Abraham and Sarah are overjoyed. They praise and glorify God. Sarah cradles the child in her arms. She is ninety years old! She laughs, but it is thankful and joyful laughter! As the Lord requested, they call the child Isaac, which means: laughter. Isaac brings new life to the quiet tent. He starts to smile and laugh, learns to walk, speak and play as children do.

Many years pass. Abraham continues to bring sacrifices to the Lord. He always offers the Lord the very best animals. He cannot imagine his life without the Lord. But Abraham also loves his son Isaac above all else. Whenever he looks at Isaac, joy fills Abraham's heart. He thinks: "Now the other

God fulfils his promises – Abraham

promises which the Lord has made to me, can also be fulfilled.”

1

Yet now the Lord tests the aged Abraham very severely once more. Abraham must prove that he loves God more than his son.

The Lord calls in the night: “Abraham!” Abraham awakes and answers: “Here I am.” Then he hears the Lord saying: “Abraham you must give back your only child to me. Go with Isaac into the land of Moriah onto a mountain and sacrifice him to me!”

Abraham gets a terrible shock! “Offer my son whom the Lord God gave to me? Did God not promise me that my descendants shall be a great nation?” Abraham just cannot understand it. He lies in bed as if paralyzed. This old man, proven in faith, fights a bitter battle within himself that night. He must decide. He cannot turn away from God. He thinks:



“Although I do not know why God expects something so terrible of me, yet he knows. Therefore I will do it.”

2

He therefore gets up very early the next morning and awakens two servants and his son Isaac. Abraham saddles an ass and cleaves the wood for the burnt-offering. Then they set out on their journey. They travel for three days. When Abraham finally sees the place which the Lord has told him of, he says to his servants: “Remain here with the ass. Isaac and I will continue alone. After the sacrifice, we shall return.” Together father and son ascend the narrow path up the mountain. At the summit, Abraham builds an altar of stones. At the moment in which he poises the knife to sacrifice his son, an angel from heaven calls down to him: “Abraham, do not kill your son, for now I know that you love God more than your son!”

In unspeakable joy, Abraham embraces his son Isaac. Suddenly there is a rustling behind them. A ram has been caught in a thicket by its horns. This the Lord has allowed to happen. Gratefully Abraham and Isaac sacrifice this animal. They praise and glorify God. And now they hear the voice of the angel from heaven once more: “Because you have not withheld your only son, I will bless you. I will make of your descendants a great nation. It will be as numerous as the stars in the heaven and the sands of the sea. Through you all nations on earth shall be blessed.”

Thankfully Abraham and Isaac and their servants return home.

3

*Abraham obeys the Lord. He was even prepared to sacrifice his son. God saves Isaac from death.
He who obeys the Lord, will be richly blessed by him.*

1 We recapitulate with the children what we covered during the preceding lesson.

2 Abraham trusts the Lord. His is not a rational decision. What do you think?

How would the story have ended? Would Isaac have died? (The children consider this and think of the promises which God has made to Abraham. If God really fulfils his promises, Isaac could not die.)

3 We look at the picture with the children. In those days the sacrifice of an animal was an expression of thankfulness: thankfulness for godly guidance and protection, thankfulness for a good harvest. It was also an expression of love for God. That is why one offered God only the very best.

What do we give God? (Our whole heart, money for the offering-box, time for the Lord.) We can speak to God in prayer and thank him for his love, his patience, his protection and his guidance.