

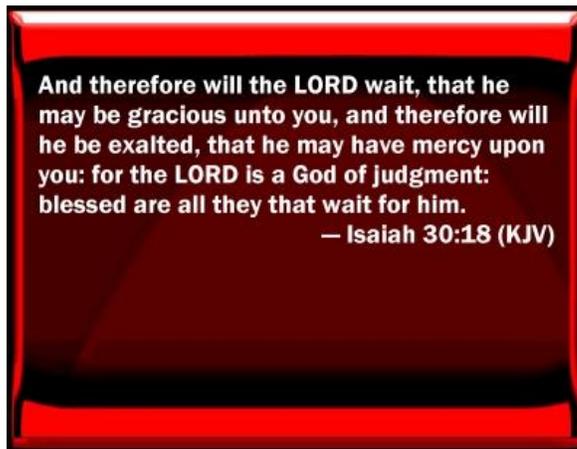
## **Responding to the New Atheists' attacks on the God of the Old Testament-27: "Child Abuse" Concluding Principles on Abraham and Isaac**

Before moving on to other issues in the Old Testament that atheists seize upon to attack and berate the God of the Old Testament—like slavery in the Old Testament, putting people to death for working on the Sabbath, it being an abomination to eat shellfish, the prohibition of cutting hair around the temples, it being unclean to touch the skin of a dead pig (a football), or planting two different crops in the same field—I wish to provide a few concluding principles on our study of God's testing of Abraham and Isaac.

1. Clearly, even the insinuation that the Old Testament God is some ogre who loves to get His people to do horrendous things like murder their own children is patently false. This is not the portrayal of God anywhere in the Old Testament and certainly not with Abraham.
2. The goodness of God lies within His own character. Something is not good *simply* because He wills it, and there is no goodness outside of God that He must submit to. God is absolute good in all of His Esse and attributes, and His will always reflects that ultimate goodness.
3. The New Testament demonstrates the goodness of God by linking Abraham's test of dedication to God's supreme sacrifice for the entire human race: "He who did not spare (*epheiso*) His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32). A form of the same Greek word is used of Abraham in the Septuagint: "You have not spared (*epheiso*) your only son" (Gen. 22:12). God did what He would not allow Abraham to do: give up his only son. Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac anticipated God's self-sacrifice in Christ. Abraham demonstrated his faithfulness to God through the test, and God's *actual* sacrifice demonstrated His faithfulness to us. The kind of demand God made of Abraham was the one the Triune God was willing to carry out himself.
4. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of Isaac. Both were willing to give up their lives in submission. The greatness of Isaac's faith is also evident as he had everything in the world to live for but willingly followed his father's words, believing that God would provide a lamb. Jesus willfully, with eyes wide open, became that Lamb for the whole world.
5. God's command for Abraham to sacrifice Isaac was the greatest test of his life. It came after receiving the promises in the Word of God regarding his seed. In this test Abraham believed in the goodness of God as much as he believed in God's Word. Because Abraham held to both the intrinsic goodness in God and the Word of God, his response to the test was instant and unquestioning. He knew that whatever God

- said was both good and true! He knew God planned the future around Isaac, yet God wanted him to sacrifice him. Abraham knew without out doubt that God Himself would provide, Jehovah Jireh!, even if God would have to raise him from the dead on the spot. The reason murder is so horrendous is that it is so final. However, if one is immediately raised for the dead, its finality no longer exists.
6. God provided a sacrificial substitute, a lamb. Later all Israel would offer animals to the Lord. Worship involved accepting God's sacrificial substitute. But of course, in the New Testament God substituted His only Son for the animal, and the perfect Sacrifice was made. John certainly had this in mind when he introduced Jesus as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the of world!" (John 1:29).
  7. The greatness of Abraham's faith was possible because of his faith in the goodness of God and the faithfulness of His Word. Only such a faith is willing to obey God by sacrificing one's son.
  8. The lessons of true faith and worship are timeless: a) Faith in God always includes an appreciation of His intrinsic goodness in whatever He brings or allows in our lives (this is something that Job had to learn the hard way); b) faith obeys completely the Word of God; c) Faith surrenders the best to God, holding nothing back. It is unfortunate that American Christianity is among the most uncommitted to God and Bible doctrine in the world; d) true faith waits on the Lord to provide all one's needs. With regard to waiting for His highest and best, what is He waiting for? Personal commitment to Him and His Word! This has always been the case.

The waiting "game."



*Pastor Don*