

God Chooses Jerusalem to Dwell

And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; and they turned not when they went. Ezekiel 1:12

We are now ready for one more background aspect that will enable us to understand God's means of manifesting His presence with men better.

We will look at three familiar events associated with God's presence in the land of Israel. Certainly you will have studied this in the past, but perhaps today will give you some additional insight into how God used these events to choose His earthly dwelling place.

Abraham Tested – Genesis 22:1

And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt [test, try, prove] Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.

Genesis 22:1

The time is approximately 1872 B.C. God approached Abraham to test or prove him.

Did God tempt Abraham to sin?

We must understand the meaning of this word and not just what we think it means.

For James 1:13 says that God “**cannot be tempted with evil, neither does he tempt any man**” (James 1:13). How do we explain this?

In the Old Testament this Hebrew word tempt means “to test or prove one.

In the New Testament, the Greek word takes one of two meanings – if the context suggests good then it means to “try, make trial of, test: for the purpose of ascertaining one’s quality” – same as Hebrew.

If the context suggest bad, then it means “to entice or attempt to entice (someone) to do or acquire something that they find attractive but know to be wrong or not beneficial.”

In this instance, God tested Abraham in order to demonstrate or show Abraham his inner self.

Remember, God already knows what we will do given certain circumstances (Psalm 139:1-3).

¹ O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. ² Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. ³ Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.

Thus, a test irrefutably shows us what **our** reaction would be in a given set of circumstances.

Tests in the Scriptures also serve as examples to modern Christians (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Furthermore, Abraham's test included two aspects:

- 1) Did Abraham **believe** God's promise of Genesis 12:2-3

And I will make of thee a great nation and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.
Genesis 12:2-3

- 2) To be a great nation, required an ongoing line of descendants – so would God keep this promise through his son Isaac, after Abraham had waited so many years for Isaac – Genesis 22:1

And He said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

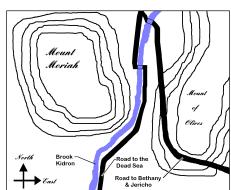
Genesis 22:2

This ultimate test demonstrated to Abraham that he had truly come to the point of unquestioning obedience to God.

This test also demonstrates to all men that God will provide for His own and will never ask more than they can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13).

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

We see that God is in total control and works all things according to His plan, even when it is humanly difficult or hard to understand (Proverbs 3:5,6).



To demonstrate his obedience, Abraham traveled three days to the mountain in the land of Moriah that God chose.

Moriah is a mountain in what is now known as the land of Israel.

Do you recognize it?

I am sure you remember the biblical account, for God allowed Abraham to reach the point of “no return” which required total obedience. One cannot prove his obedience by words and intentions; action is required.

David Tested

Approximately 1000 years after Abraham, in 975 B.C.

In 2 Samuel 24:2, we see that David, as King of Israel, ordered Joab, his captain of the army, to go and number the people of the tribes of Israel. A king would do this to demonstrate his military might. Joab, knowing that such a census was not of God, asked David why he wanted to do this (v. 3). Despite Joab’s reluctance and at David’s insistence, the census was taken. After taking the census, David recognizes that it was sinful to number the men – numbers do not matter in battle if God is on your side.

And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.

As a consequence of his sin, God offers David a choice of three chastisements as we read in 2 Samuel 24:13:

Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land?

This is the only biblically related case where David revealed his selfishness: verse 14:

And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man.

Notice, “let us fall” versus “let **me** not fall.”

David let it fall upon the people. Then God acted:

15 So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men.

God then responded and **chose** the location where His presence would “dwell” upon the earth:

16 And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough: stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD was by the threshing place of Araunah the Jebusite.

Notice, the angel stopped where God wanted him to stop, the threshing floor of Araunah.

Araunah (derived from the Hittite “freeman, noble”) may well have been the last Jebusite king of Jerusalem. He is also called Ornan in 1 Chronicles 21:18ff.¹

Jebusites were the local people who dwelled in the mountains around the city of Jerusalem.

Notice carefully, the location is the same as Mt Moriah.

God designated that place as Jerusalem .

But I have chosen Jerusalem, that my name might be there; and have chosen David to be over my people Israel.

2 Chronicles 6:6

Solomon began building the First Temple 480 years (957 B.C.) after the Hebrews had left the land of Egypt. Now Israel would be the permanent dwelling place of God; in a temple, not a temporary tent or tabernacle.

The Tabernacle was the first, but *temporary dwelling*).

Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem, as God had instructed. The exact location was to be on a very historic spot; Mount Moriah.

Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the LORD appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshing floor of Ornan [another name for Araunah] the Jebusite.

2 Chronicles 3:1

As we will see next week, God’s presence indicated His blessing upon the nation. Likewise, His absence from the land and from the Temple indicated God’s chastisement and displeasure.

In 2 Chronicles 7:1 we read of God’s presence, the Shekinah glory, descending upon the altar and taking up occupancy in the Temple.

Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the Glory of the LORD filled the house.

2 Chronicles 7:1

The ultimate proof of God's blessing was His presence of the **Shekinah Glory** as it stood over the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies. As long as it was present, God was blessing Israel.

Next week we will see what happens when God's people fail to display God's glory to the world.

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