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The True Sacrifice

"The Lord will provide".

Genesis 22:14

God takes care of man. He provides for all our needs, but in particular He provides for the most fundamental need man has known since the fall: the need for a *sacrifice*. Abraham must have understood this when he said to his son, whom he was to offer, "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering" (Gen. 22:8). God was the only One who could provide the sacrificial lamb and it was primarily meant for God Himself: "God will provide *Himself* a lamb for a burnt offering". This lamb was, so to speak, God's own lamb, a figure of Christ as the appointed Lamb of God. And the offering of Isaac was a type of Christ's sacrifice – foreordained by God before the foundation of the world (cf. John 1:29, 36; 1 Pet. 1:19-20; Rev. 5:6ff.).

This Lamb provides for the needs of the sinner, who is totally unable to do so himself. But it also meets all God's holy demands. Indeed, by His sacrifice Christ glorified God in a unique way. The lamb that is brought to our attention here in Genesis 22 was a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, a sweet odour to the Lord (Gen. 8:21; Lev. 1:9, 13, 17; Eph. 5:2). No one else but God Himself could provide for man's need, and from the above-mentioned verse in 1 Peter it appears that He had provided for it even before He called the world into being.

How great is our God that He Himself provided the sacrificial lamb! Adam and Eve experienced this when they were clothed with garments of skin in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:21). Not man but God was the first One to bring a sacrifice, and He clothed the first human couple with the skins of these animals in order to cover

their nakedness (and also in a symbolical way their spiritual nakedness, that is, their sinful state before God).

Abraham also experienced this when the Lord provided for his needs and directed his eyes toward a substitute for his son (Gen. 22:13). In remembrance of this he called the name of that place, "The Lord will provide" (v. 14a), which is just one word in Hebrew, "Jehovah-jireh". Abraham used a compound name of the Lord, which indicates that it is one of His glorious attributes to act in this way and to provide Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.

This wonderful name of God is the first one of a series of compound names revealed in the Old Testament:

1. The Lord will provide (Gen. 22:14).
2. The Lord who heals you (Ex. 15:26).
3. The Lord my banner (Ex. 17:15).
4. The Lord who sanctifies you (Lev. 20:8; Lev. 21:8).
5. The Lord is peace (Judg. 6:24).
6. The Lord is my shepherd (Ps. 23:1).
7. The Lord our righteousness (Jer. 23:6; Jer. 33:16).
8. The Lord is there (Ezek. 48:35).

The first name shows that God provides for the most essential need of sinful man, the need of a substitute. This is the basis on which God can reveal more of Himself and of the many aspects of His nature. The last name shows Him filling everything with His glorious presence: 'The Lord is there', and there is no room for sin any more, for ultimately God will be all in all (1 Cor. 15:28).

Then we should also pay attention to the *place* where God revealed Himself in this way, where He made Himself known as the One providing the lamb for a burnt offering. He did so *in the Mount of the Lord* (Gen. 22:14b). This is an important expression. God revealed Himself on this *mountain*, the place where Abraham found himself on the level of His thoughts, rather than in the plain of Jordan which Lot chose (Gen. 13:10-11). God called Abraham, as it were, into His heavenly presence. The same thing happened to the disciples who received divine teaching from the Lord Jesus on a mountain (see Matt. 5:1ff.). And it was also on "the holy mount" that they saw His glory and were eyewitnesses of His majesty (cf. 2 Pet. 1:16-18).

Moreover, this mountain is described as *the Mount of the Lord*. We find the same expression in the book of Exodus where it always has to do with God's revelation on Mount Sinai. Just as Moses led the flock of his father-in-law all the way

through the desert to Horeb, the mountain of God, he also led the people of Israel through the wilderness to this mountain (Ex. 3:1; Ex. 18:5; Ex. 24:13). It was the mountain where God sat enthroned. He desired to reveal Himself to the people that He had delivered from slavery to be His special treasure. So we are on holy ground here and, like Moses, have to put off our shoes. Thus the people of Israel, too, and most of all the priests, had to sanctify themselves in order to be able to meet with God at the foot of the mountain (Ex. 19).

Yet this expression, the mountain of God, does not only refer to Mount Sinai. It is also used for Mount Zion, and for the Temple Mount, after the ark of the covenant (the visible sign of God's presence) found a resting place there (cf. Ps. 15:1, Ps. 24:3; Ps. 48:1-2). This is very striking with regard to the Temple Mount, for there is a clear connection between Genesis 22, 1 Chronicles 21-22 and 2 Chronicles 3. Abraham went to the *land* of Moriah to offer his son on one of the mountains of which God would tell him, while king David built his altar of burnt offering on *Mount* Moriah.

This was the place where atonement was made for a sinful people, the place of the altar of burnt offering for Israel – which enabled God to dwell in the midst of His people. Mount Moriah, the place where Abraham sacrificed his son, was to be the place of the altar of burnt offering for God's people. This mountain therefore points to the place called Calvary, where God did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. And in doing so He laid a just foundation for the future temple in the Spirit, that was to be built after Christ's resurrection from the dead!

Finally, it is remarkable that the Hebrew name of the upper altar in Ezekiel's temple is also "Har-El" or Mount of God (Ezek. 43:15 JND). Here too, the altar is the place where man will draw near to God in a coming age – on the same basis of a burnt offering, looking back at Christ as the true sacrifice which God Himself provided and which fully pleased Him.

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