

August 28, 2016

Who is Your God?

"When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless. I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers...You will be the father of many nations...No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham..." Genesis 17:1-19

There are many in our world who doubt that God exists, doubt his power, or doubt his capacity to save us. Sometimes we are among those who doubt and in this we are not alone. Abram was one of those who struggled, I believe, with doubts. Abram had been called by God to leave everything behind and go to the land of Canaan and because of his obedience God had promised to bless him.

Many years later God comes again to Abram to renew the covenant he had first established with the Patriarch. Abram, I think, has come to doubt that God can deliver on at least one part of his promise, the part that says Abram will become the father of a great nation. Abram has no children with his beloved wife Sarai.

So when God, the El Shaddai, comes to Abram again to renew the covenant promises he has made, the Patriarch has lost faith in God's capacity to deliver. When God tells the old man that he and his wife will have a child, Abram doubts and laughs at the idea. But God is able to deliver on his promises and Abraham, the Father of the faithful, and Sarah have a child. God is our El Shaddai, the God who is sufficient, the God who can. There is nothing he cannot do and there is no power that can overthrow him.

El Shaddai gives Abraham and Sarah a child long after it should be possible for them to have a child. Several years later God comes to Abraham and commands him, *"Take you son, you only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."* (Genesis 22:2) Can you imagine what this command ment to the old man? El Shaddai has given him a son. Beyond all hope he and his wife have a son, and now that same God demands that he kill that child.

But Abraham's faith has grown. In complete surrender he takes his beloved son and sets off to do what God has demanded. As they near the region of Moriah Isaac who is probably about thirteen asks his father where the sacrific is. Abraham's gentle answer demonstrates his great faith. *"God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son."* (Genesis 22:8) In the Hebrew this name for God, Jehovah or YHWH Jireh means God provides.

Abraham's words show us that he has come to understand that his God can do anything. His El Shaddai is all sufficient and if his God demands even the life of his beloved son, the son of promise, then Abraham will choose obedience. But the old Patriarch also knows that his God will provide, and of course, God does. This passage contains both a story of great and trusting faith, and a prophecy about what our Jehovah Jireh will do for us. Just as Abraham was sure that his God would provide the 'lamb' for the sacrifice, we can know that our God has also provided his perfect 'lamb' for the sacrifice that will save the world.



So, our God is both our El Shaddai, the powerful source of everything we need for life, and our Jehovah Jireh the provider of the perfect sacrifice. When the terrors of our world, shaken by

the forces of evil, begin to challenge our faith we need to remember what Abraham, the father of the faithful, learned. Our God, like his, is El Shaddai, the one who can; and Jehovah Jireh, the one who does provide. Safe in the keeping of our God we have nothing to fear from this world.