



Bare Bones Series (BBS)

An Apologetic of Genesis 22

Session One

In Session Five of our BBS on Salvation in Israel's program, we talked about the issue of God commanding Abraham to offer his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice, as a burnt offering. The book of James says that by reason of Abraham's obedience, he was justified in the eyes of men as the "Friend of God."

This was something the members of the believing remnant (BR) are asked to do out in the final installment of the 5th course of punishment (CoP); to demonstrate, by their obedience to the doctrine given to them, that they are the "Friend of God," and by such, they not only provide for their deliverance in the Tribulation, but they also gain entrance into the kingdom with reward.

Because of time's sake, I did not have the opportunity to defend God's command to sacrifice Isaac or Abraham's willingness to do what God said. God's command to Abraham to sacrifice his son has been much used by atheists and skeptics to bring reproach upon God, the Bible and Christianity in general.

So, in this short BBS, I want to offer a brief defense of God's command and of Abraham's obedience.

The context for this is found in Genesis 22. You should go over and read the entire chapter on your own.

By this time, Abraham has been justified unto eternal life (JUEL) for well over 30 years. He is living in the area of Beersheba which is about 60 miles SSW of where Jerusalem would one day be.



When Abraham and Isaac go to Mount Moriah, they are coming from Beersheba, a 3-day journey of about 60 miles.

God tells Abraham to take Isaac, journey to a mountain that God will show him, and sacrifice his son as a burnt offering to God. Abraham obeys God and journeys to Mt. Moriah, which is right in the Jerusalem area. Abraham prepares the altar and is about to sacrifice Isaac when the LORD stops him and commands Abraham not to harm his son. Nearby the altar, a ram is caught in a thicket, and it becomes the sacrifice to God. Abraham names that place Jehovah-Jireh, "the LORD will provide."

The issue is that skeptics and atheists have used this passage to charge God with sin. Because the thought of sacrificing one of our children seems so despicable, we wonder what God was doing by asking Abraham to do this, even if God knew He would stop Abraham from harming Isaac.

The attack is articulated like this: "Why would God commit sin by asking Abraham to sacrifice his son to Him, and why would Abraham be willing to sin by sacrificing his son?"

Let's start with the answers to the questions and then I will explain the answers. The questions themselves are wrong; for they assume that both God and Abraham sinned. God did not sin by asking Abraham to sacrifice his son, and Abraham did not sin by obeying God. How can that be? We are going to divide up these two questions by dealing with them one at a time.

The reason God did not sin is because He is sovereign over His creation. I know I will need to explain this answer, so let's do it.

When we say that God is sovereign over His creation, we mean that God holds the position of being the Supreme Ruler over His creation. His authority is absolute and His dominion is all-inclusive.

Let's look at two of the reasons this is true:

- 1) It is true because of who He is – He is God
- 2) It is true because of what He has done – He is the Creator

Before either of these can carry any weight with us, we must first understand what these two things entail.

Once we understand who God is (especially in relation to who we are as creatures), and once we understand the infinite gap between the creation and the Creator, we will recognize the indisputable truth that God has utter and complete discretion with regard to everything in His creation and what He chooses to do with it. It is His right alone to deal with His creation as He sees fit.

God is not part of the creation, He is above His creation. God is further above His creation, than things in the creation compared to other things in the creation.

IN BEING



ANGELIC REALM
MANKIND
ANIMALS/FISH/BIRDS
PLANT LIFE
MICROSCOPIC LIFE (Bacteria, Viruses, etc.)
INANIMATE OBJECTS
(Earth, Dirt, Clouds, Rocks, Stars, etc.)

God is farther above anything in His creation than anything in the creation is above any other thing in creation. For example, there is less distance between you and the fly you swatted than there is between God and you. There is less distance between you and the mosquitoes you kill than between God and anything in His creation.

God is so far above His creation, that He has the right to do His will with that creation, no matter what He chooses to do. This understanding is part of a study on the doctrine of God (more specifically on the Sovereignty of God). We do not have time in this study to do that kind of an in-depth study, but we do need to get a clear picture of just how much God owns the whole creation, because when you understand, then you will know that God can command anything in the creation to do whatsoever He wants, and by that God violates no moral law; in other words, God does not sin by doing so.

If you are struggling to get this in your thinking, then you do not have a sufficient understanding of who God is, and it would help you greatly to study the Doctrine of God.

I am going to make an analogy, but sometimes these are not helpful because to try and illustrate the difference between God and His creation, by comparing things within the creation, well, because of its limitations, the comparison will ultimately fail. For example, trying to demonstrate any of God's attributes by observing those attributes in people, is futile because nothing fully measures up to God. So, being forewarned with that knowledge, let me still try and give you an idea of God's sovereignty.

Let's say that you buy some property. You clear part of that property to build a house. Let's say you clear enough property to not only have a house, but a yard for the kids to play in and for a garage. And, let's say that you plant St. Augustine grass in your yard and you keep it mowed and looking good. Then, you plant flower beds in front of the house to spruce the place up. And maybe you put up a swing set for the kids.

Now, in order to make my point, I am going to ask you some ridiculous questions.

What makes you think you have any right to clear any part of that property to build your house? Where do you get off thinking you can choose where to cut down trees and clear brush and briars?

What gives you the authority to plant grass? And what gives you the right to mow that grass when it grows up? What did that grass do to you? And who do you think you are deciding to put in flower beds? And not only that, what gives you the right to pick which flowers will go in those beds? What makes you think you can have a garage or put up a swing set? What is the answer?

The answer is: You can do all of those things because you own it.

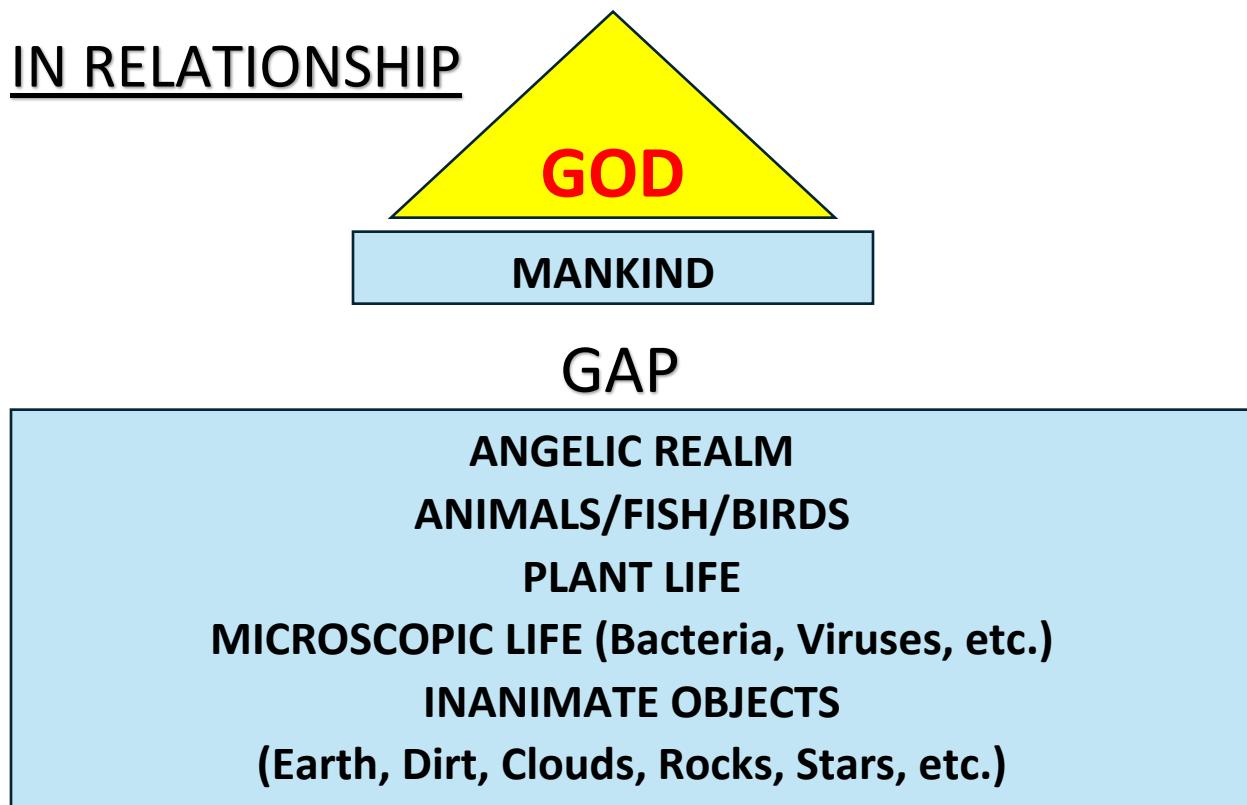
If we can assume that owning the property gives us the right to make some choices about how we will deal with it, because in a limited sense we are “sovereign” over it, then you are only beginning to understand God’s sovereignty. God didn’t buy it, He made it from nothing. He brought it into existence without needing anything else. It is His in a way that will never be yours. His ownership is infinitely greater than yours.

How can that be? Because your property was someone else’s before you and when you die, it will pass on to someone else. Your “ownership” is temporary.

But the creation had no previous owner. From when it came into existence at His command, it was God’s. And it will never belong to someone else, as it will always be His. His ownership is greater because ultimately, even when you buy it and register yourself as the owner at the courthouse, God still owns it.

Now, let’s talk about the living part of the creation. God owns all of that too, not just the inanimate objects like rocks and the dirt, but the plant life, the animals and also mankind. Mankind is not here without God and mankind does continue to exist without God.

When God puts man into a place higher than the rest of the creation, the cows may not think that is fair, but it is His creation and He can do with it what He wills. We don’t argue with being over the cows because we are the beneficiaries, but in the end, cows are not made in the image of God, so they can never be equal to or better than mankind.



I hope you are beginning to see that God has just as much right to do with mankind as He pleases as He does the dirt and waters.

Now I am going to give three different comparisons to try and establish just how much right God has over His creation.

Let's take your right to actually live in the house which you own. God's right to have dominion over His creation is infinitely greater than your right to live in the house you may have bought and paid for. You may have even built it. But either way, when you own your home, you have every right to live there, to decorate it the way you want, to paint the walls the colors you choose, etc. Everything about that is up to you.

But, your right to live in and decorate your home is not a sufficient comparison of God's right to deal with His creation. Because He is God, then His rights are beyond our rights, His freedom exceeds our freedom, and His right to do His will is far greater than ours. If it was not, then He would not be God. In all aspects, God's rights and authority super-exceeds our rights and authority to do anything.

Here is the second comparison: The difference between the potter and the nonliving clay is less than the difference between God and His living creation. Now, the potter and the clay may serve as a metaphor, and the Bible uses this metaphor to make the point.

Romans 9:20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?²¹ **Hath not the potter power over the clay,** of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

People today tend to look at God like He is another creature who has no more rights or authority than we do. If the potter has the right to do his will with the pot that he is forming, and he does, then God's rights over His creation is infinitely greater.

In other words, I have less right to go out into the parking lot and get in my 20-year old truck which, is paid for and belongs to me; my right to get in that truck and drive it home is less than God's right to completely destroy His entire creation along with everyone in it.

Remember, we are talking about God's Sovereignty, not about whether God can commit sin. God cannot sin. In fact, the Bible says that God cannot even be tempted to sin. For example, the Bible says that God cannot lie. He isn't just trying hard not to lie, it is His immutable nature that He cannot lie. But for now, we are not talking about God having the right to sin, we are talking about God's right to do whatsoever He wants with His creation.

Therefore, nothing God could do with His creation could be called a sin, including asking Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Now, I can hear someone say, "Oh, so it's okay for God to tell

Abraham to sacrifice his son, but it wouldn't be okay for anyone else to do that." Yes! You got it!

There are some things that only God has the right to do, and matters of "life and death" are part of God's rights. The right to kill is only extended to men as a part of civil law and order and when conducting war. Apart from those exceptions, men do not have the right to kill.

To what extent is God's sovereignty? God's right over His creation knows no bounds, so that God can decide to kill, or to make alive, and He has the right to do so without violating any moral law or committing sin.

Deuteronomy 32:39 See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: **I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.**

All I'm doing right now is telling you about it. What we really need to do is learn about all this in a study on the doctrine of God, which would require a number of lessons.

But for now, I am establishing the fact that God can tell Abraham to sacrifice his only son without violating any moral law. In fact, God is the only one who could command such a thing and not be committing sin by doing so; and that is true on the basis of who God is.

So, God did not sin by telling Abraham to sacrifice his son because, as the Creator of all things, He is completely sovereign over His creation. If He is not, then He is not God.

Not only that, but God is also sovereign over His creation because He is the sustainer of all things. What do I mean by that? I mean that everything continues to exist only because God actively and continually sustains all things to the degree, that if God stopped, every single thing in the creation would instantly cease to exist.

Just to give you some verses about this, take a look at Acts 17:28.

Acts 17:28 For **in him we live, and move, and have our being;** as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

The very fact that we have life, that we continue to exist, is totally dependent upon God.

The very fact that we "have being," is totally dependent upon God. It isn't just that at every conception, God came down and produced within that biological process a "living soul" by creating a human spirit to dwell in a biological body, which is true and wonderful, but it is more than that.

The very fact that you, and I am talking about the real you, not your body, the fact that you exist and "have being" is because: 1) you have been, and still are constantly present in God's

mind, 2) because of God's continual omnipresence with you, no matter when and no matter where you are...

And if you don't think His presence is an issue in all of this, look at what Jesus said in Matthew 10.

Matthew 10:28 And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and **one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.**³⁰ But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.³¹ Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.

In other words, every time a sparrow, which is insignificant when compared to people, falls to the ground, God the Father is there. He didn't say that a sparrow doesn't fall without God knowing about it, He said a sparrow doesn't fall without God being there when it happens.

...and because 3) God is actively sustaining you in that condition of "having being."

People have the idea that if God were dead, then everything would just continue along; just without God. But that is untrue. The Bible declares that the only reason things continue to exist is because God is actively sustaining the creation by His power. (And by the way, if God could die, then He wouldn't be God.)

That doesn't mean that when your body dies God is no longer sustaining you, because He is. He is sustaining the real you; your spirit. That is why your soul and spirit continue after your body is dead. For God to stop actively sustaining your soul and spirit, you would simply vanish away.

While this is just a bit off-topic, let me answer the question, "Could God, or does God have the power, to do away with the real "being" of a person (their soul and spirit)? I think He does. He brought it all into being, I believe He could take it out as well.

Now, let's take a look at some verses that demonstrate that God is the sustainer of all things.

Colossians 1: 17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

It is because of God's sustaining power that everything, in the entire creation, holds together, including us.

But let's get back to the point; as God, as the Creator, and as the Sustainer of all things, God rightfully possesses all things and He can do with His creation whatsoever pleases Him without violating His holiness or His righteousness.

Some other references you might want to look at are Isaiah 40:17ff. where the greatness of God is extolled; that there is nothing even close to God. To understand God's Sovereignty, we

must first understand some things about God Himself. Isaiah 40 is a good starting point for that as he compares God to all the people in the world and to the angelic realm as well.

Isaiah 40:17 **All nations before him are as nothing**; and they are counted to him **less than nothing**, and vanity.¹⁸ To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?¹⁹ The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains.²⁰ He that *is* so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree *that* will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, *that* shall not be moved.²¹ Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth?²² *It is* he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and **the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers**; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:²³ That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.

Isaiah 40:28 Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth...

What are we supposed to get out of this? That any, and every, thing in the creation, when compared to God, is nothing but emptiness; vanity. And this includes the angelic “gods” which are also part of the creation.

Nehemiah 9:6 Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, **and thou preservest them all**; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.

Ezra says that God is not only the Creator, but He is the Preserver of all things too. In other words, things endure moment by moment because God preserves them.

God is the Source, the Sustainer and the Goal of everything outside Himself.

Romans 11:36 For **of him**, and **through him**, and **to him**, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

Hebrews 2:10 For it became him, **for whom** are all things, and **by whom** are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

We need to understand that God is so far above His creation; that His right to do with it, even in the areas of life and death, is above and beyond the rights of anything in the creation itself.

God’s rights and authority are just like His person in that they extend to everything without exception and sometimes include things which are not lawful for any other being.