The Loving Narrative

There is one desire and longing that consumes so much time in so many peoples lives. Often these same people are like the man or woman traveler that has been wondering in the desert looking for just one small drop of water. When off in the distance they see what looks to be water, but as they approach the water just seems to get farther away or just disappear and the traveler realizes what they had seen was a mirage; an illusion. What happened here can be simple explained as to the fact that the seeker saw what they longed for and found comfort for a short while in what they thought was water until they realized its true identity. That mirage of water was nothing and added nothing but a deeper longing and hardened perception for what they have sought or seek. So that when the real thing for which they were seeking comes into their life they have no clue as to what they have sought for so long they have truly found. This desire and longing is for a true love. People are looking for it so hard that they find themselves disillusioned as to the fact that something else was that love that they were searching for, that they miss the one true love that is talked about in this Narrative. This paper will take a look at the method used to critique the chosen artifact, then will take a look at the artifact, and then will be evaluated with the 6 aspects of a narrative criticism. In Genesis 22:1-19 is a causal narrative that through hermeneutics and narrative criticism when discussed and critically looked at points to the true love of God found in the New Testament.
The first aspect to be looked at in this paper is the method of criticism used on the artifact, which is Genesis 22:1-19. The method that is used in this paper is the narrative criticism. The steps to the narrative criticism paper are to “analyze the theme, structure, characters, peripeteia, narrative voice, and style.” (Sillars) This can all be known as Hermeneutics, because of the “literary interpretation” that will be made in this paper. (Palmer) The analysis of theme is used to point out the main point of the artifact, which with the scripture is a three fold theme. The three fold theme can be broken down like this as being what is said that affects us historically, doctrinally, and personally. This is the way that any type of scripture can be broken down. After analyzing the theme normally one would move on to evaluating the structure of the article and how it affects the reader and overall meaning of the artifact. Structure is usually looked at as the beginning, middle and end and how they all work together to form the artifact that is present before the reader. After one evaluates the structure of the artifact then they will look at each character and analysis the important role that they had in what was analyzed. After the three parts that have proceeded comes three more.

The fourth one being peripetia in which the critic will analyze what the change of fortunes was and how it affects the outcome of the story. The student would closely look at what caused this turn of events, why it happened, and possibly what it symbolizes. This part that is analyzed is usually the climax of the story that is being closely looked at by the student. Leading us into the fifth part of a narrative critique, this is the narrative voice. The narrative voice is the evaluation of who told the story or wrote it, how it was told, why it was told, and the situation in which it is told. Finally leaving us with the evaluation of the style in which the artifact is looked at in the aspect of it’s “words,
grammar, and figures of speech reflect a culture.” (Sillars) But the point of this method being used is to “insist that a causal connection between two events is essential.” (Richard)

The artifact is Genesis 22:1-19, in which Abraham is tempted by God to offer his son as a burnt sacrifice to God. Just something to keep in mind is that fact that God had already promised Abraham that he would make a great nation out of his seed Isaac. So then Abraham took his son to sacrifice him on an ass with two of his “young men” and they went were God had told them to go. On the third day of travel when Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place that God had told him to go in the distance and told the young men to stay back and that “he and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.” (Genesis 22:5) So even though God told him to sacrifice his son Abraham had some faith that God would provide a sacrifice other than his son.

So as Abraham and Isaac climbed the mountain Isaac was carrying the wood for the sacrifice. When they got to the top of the mountain they built an altar and Abraham laid Isaac on the altar and raised his knife in obedience to God, sacrificing his own son if he had to. But at the moment before the knife pierced his son an angel of the Lord stopped him and said, “Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.” (Genesis 22:12) At that moment there was a ram in the thicket behind Abraham and God provided it instead of the sacrifice of Abraham’s son. Then God says again that he is going to bless the earth because Abraham obeyed God’s word.

The first part of the analysis is of the theme. The theme that is presented in this text is God was going to provide the sacrifice and would provide the ultimate sacrifice for
man’s sins from his ancestral lines, which is tied into the verse found in John 3:16. The verse John 3:16 is very popular in Christian thought and says “for God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” This connection is seen when in reading that when Abraham is prepared to slay his son for the past years sins God provides a lamb and then God say in verse 18 of the same chapter that all the nations of the world would be blessed through his seed. That blessing is the eternal life offered because of the sacrifice of God’s only son Jesus Christ on the cross. The connections of Christ to this story can be seen even more clearly with an analysis of the structure of the text.

The next part of the analysis of this text is the structure of the artifact. The three parts that will be analyzed are the tempting of Abraham to offer and sacrifice his only son Isaac, the moment of the act of sacrifice, and the promise of a blessing for the earth through Abraham’s seed. The tempting of Abraham at the start of this chapter of Abraham’s life had to be a true test of one’s love and devotion for their God. While Abraham had the promise of a nation coming from his seed, he still had to be scared to sacrifice the one close to him. In this story Abraham was willing to give up his son for the glory of God, just as God did as described in John 3:16. God the father of Christ gave “his only begotten son” so that his creation could have atonement for their sins. Each of the gospels has some mention of the birth of Christ and are New Testament reenactments of God doing what he expected of Abraham in chapter 22 of Genesis. The middle part or climax of the structure of this text is the moment that the angel of God stops Abraham from sacrificing his son. Isaac was laid on the wood that was used to build the altar and was going to shed his blood, just as Christ shed his blood in the New Testament. Except
for the altar that Christ died on was made of wood but this wood was in the fashion of a cross. You find reference to this happening in Matthew 27:37-50, Mark 15:25-37, Luke 23:38-46, and John 19:28-37. Then the final part of the causal connection of this narrative to the Old Testament is the promise of blessing the whole world through his seed Isaac, but really through the sacrifice of Christ and then they return to the “young men” and they returned home. This is just as Christ he raised from the dead after he was the ultimate love offering and sacrifice for the worlds sins. The connections in the New Testament are referenced as Matthew 28:5-7, Mark 16:4-7, Luke 24:1-9, and John 20:1-10. In each of these you see Mary Magdalene and the Mother Mary going to the grave and not finding Christ in the grave, because he had triumph over death. This victory over death written about in the New Testament is just like Abraham and Isaac who had triumph over death because God provide the sacrifice. But as we need to explain the structure we need to also understand the importance of each character within the story to fully understand how these parts work together to portray the love of God for his creature: man/woman.

There are four main characters in this passage of Genesis 22 and they each have an important role in the causal connection to the New Testament sacrifice of Jesus for the atonement of the sins of humankind. Isaac is one of the most important characters in this story, because he was the Christ figure in this excerpt of scripture; he is the only begotten son of Abraham, just as Christ was of God. Isaac is written to have carried the wood of the altar to the mountain top, just as Christ carried his cross to the mountain top. They were both offered as sacrifices on a mountain top. Isaac was offered as a sacrifice to God by Abraham because of his love for God and God sent his son a sacrifice in love for all
humanity. The two servants in the story are a picture of the two thieves that Christ was crucified between. The Lamb that was found also is a picture of Christ; because the lamb was provide to sacrifice just as Christ who is referred to in scripture as the Lamb of God was provided as the ultimate sacrifice of love. These characters help to causally connect this Old Testament happening to the New Testament and make a case for Christ being the ultimate sacrifice given by love. With this analysis of the character it helps us to understand the connection of the immediate change of circumstances form Isaac being sacrificed to the lamb being the sacrifice.

This change of circumstances is also known as peripetia. Peripetia is seen in this story as the climax the moment that the angel says “hey wait don’t kill Isaac.” Then, pointing out that God has provided a lamb as a sacrifice because Abraham did as he was commanded of God and was obedient. This circumstance is connected to all the scripture pointed out in the structure section of this paper. The parts that were listed point out the birth, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. So all the parts that have been discussed have been important, but so is the narrator’s voice.

The narrator of this story or author is Moses. But this story was most likely passed down from Abraham to Isaac to all of the Jews until Moses when it was finally penned down and so ended the oral tradition of the Jews. Moses had a good amount of word choice that helped with the fact that the Old Testament plugs perfectly back into the New Testament of the story of a father giving his only son, a lamb provided to be the sacrifice. These all just worked together to provide a solid causal narrative connection between these two divisions in order to point to the ultimate gift of love and that is sacrifice.
This essay was a causal narrative connection with the use of hermeneutics and narrative criticism to form a connection from the Old Testament passage that was discussed and critically looked to point out the true love of God found in the New Testament. This was done by comparing scripture with scripture and making interpretations using hermeneutics and narrative criticism. Each of the six areas that are viewed and discussed in a narrative criticism were used and pointed directly to the passage in Genesis 22 as connecting to the true love of God given to humanity through Jesus Christ.
Bibliography

King James Bible Authorized Version 1611 (there is no real copyright on this version)


