

Genesis 22:1-19 • The Shadow of the Cross

Introduction

Hundreds of years before Moses and the Law will finally appear on earth, even before the existence of Israel and his sons through whom an entire chosen people will grow, God revealed His mind and will through the example of Abraham and Isaac. God demonstrated that man needs God to provide a sacrificial lamb in his place and even demonstrated it on the very spot on which He would provide it for all mankind in centuries yet to come. It is no coincidence that when John the Baptist first identifies the Messiah he proclaims, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29b)

¹Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!"

And he said, "Here I am."

²He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you."

³So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

[Read v.1-3]

Q: What is the phrase used by Abraham throughout this passage that indicates his spiritual maturity?

A: He always answers, "Here I am". He is ready for God's service.

Q: What is the phrase first used here and repeated twice more in this passage that immediately illustrates to us the parallel between what father Abraham is asked to do to his son Isaac and God the Father will do through His Son Jesus Christ?

A: "...your son, your only son..."

Q: How did Abraham approach God's commands?

A: Without delay and with full preparation to carry them out.

Q: What is significant about Moriah, the place God directs them to carry out this sacrifice?

A: These will be the hills upon which Jerusalem will be built. It's possible that this very hill is either the one on which the Temple will be built or Golgotha where Christ Himself will be crucified.

Q: How do we know what Abraham was thinking that allowed him to go through with this without hesitation?

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, "IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED." He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.

Hebrews 11:17-19

⁴On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. ⁵Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you.” ⁶Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together.

⁷Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, “My father!”

And he said, “Here I am, my son.”

And he said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

⁸Abraham said, “God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” So the two of them walked on together.

⁹Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!”

And he said, “Here I am.”

¹²He said, “Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.”

¹³Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. ¹⁴Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide, as it is said to this day, “In the mount of the LORD it will be provided.”

[Read v.4-8]

Q: How might these verses bear a resemblance to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane?

A: It was the time of preparation for the sacrifice to come to which He brought only three of His disciples with Him. The preceding three days were the last in His earthly ministry in Jerusalem, leading up to the very moment of the sacrifice on the cross.

Q: How does Isaac resemble Christ?

A: Just as Christ will bear the wooden cross to a hill in Moriah to be sacrificed, so Isaac bears the wood to such a hill for his own sacrifice.

Q: Is Abraham’s response to Isaac purposely evasive?

A: Perhaps, but like many other instances in Scripture, the utterer may be unknowingly communicating the Word and will of God directly, even though they have something else in mind. The primary example of this is very appropriate to this situation:

But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish.”

John 11:49-50

Just like Caiaphas, Abraham may be thinking one thing but still communicating the truth of God’s will and intent.

[Read v.9-14]

Q: How is Isaac’s behavior just as amazing as that of Abraham’s? What do they teach us about the Son and God the Father?

A: Isaac is just as submissive and obedient as Abraham. It’s a picture of the obedience of Christ the Son to God His Father in order to do what is necessary on our behalf.

Q: In v.1, how were these events labeled?

A: “God tested Abraham”. They are labeled a test.

Q: In v.5, how did Abraham label these events?

A: “I and the lad will go over there; and will worship”. The are labeled as worship.

Q: In v.12, how does God label the result of Abraham’s response to these events?

A: “For now I know that you fear God”. They are defined as respect and reverence for God.

Q: What does this teach us about our own approach to obedience, to being tested?

A: We should approach it as our spiritual service, our worship, our very reverence for the sovereignty and authority of God, which is the way Christ approached the cross.

[Continued on the next page.]

¹⁵Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, ¹⁶and said, “By Myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. ¹⁸In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

¹⁹So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham lived at Beersheba.

Q: How is Isaac like Christ in this passage?

A: In that Abraham was committed to killing Isaac and prevented from doing so by God, Isaac has gone from death to life, an example of a type of resurrection.

Q: What is the primary teaching of this example?

A: That God will provide a personal sacrifice in our place. The naming of the hill itself—“*The LORD Will Provide*”—reinforces this teaching and foreshadows not just the work of the Messiah but what the sacrifices truly symbolize when undertaken as part of the operation of the Temple on that very hill.

Q: How did Christ teach about Abraham and the correct interpretation of these events for those to whom He preached?

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.”

John 8:56

[Read v.15-19]

Q: What are the three promises concerning Abraham’s “seed” or descendants?

1. **“I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore”.** The promise of physical blessings.
2. **“Your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies”.** The promise of spiritual blessings.
3. **“In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed”.** The promise of the Messiah to come from Abraham’s seedline on behalf of the entire earth.

Q: According to v.18, how did this all come about?

A: *“Because you have obeyed My voice”.*

Application: *Have you noticed how obedience is so much more often associated with a right relationship with God, and that love is rarely mentioned so? Explain why. What are the examples of Abraham and Isaac for us personally?*

Epilogue

Q: Genesis is a book of “firsts”. What four words that are key throughout the entire Bible are mentioned for the very first time in chapter 22?

A: Test, love, worship, and obey.

Q: How are they used?

- (v.1) “God tested Abraham”.
- (v.2) “Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac...and offer him there as a burnt offering”.
- (v.5) “I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you.”
- (v.18) “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed because you have obeyed my voice.”

Q: How does God sum up the result of these words as applied in the life and example of Abraham?

A: “...now I know that you fear God”.

Application: Take each of these words and apply them to your own definitions of what you think they mean and how they’re carried out in your life, compared to the example and actions of Abraham. Do they come together to prove that you fear God?