

# GENESIS

## Chapter 22

### The Sacrifice of Isaac

After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” 2 He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.” 3 So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. 4 On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. 5 Then Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.” 6 And Abraham 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 they went both of them together. 7 And Isaac said to his father Abraham, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” He said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” 8 Abraham said, “God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” So they went both of them together. 9 When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. 11 But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” 12 He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.” 13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called the name of that place, “The LORD will provide”; as it is said to this day, “On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.” 15 And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven 16 and said, “By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, 18 and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.” 19 So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba. And Abraham lived at Beersheba. 20 Now after these things it was told to Abraham, “Behold, Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor: 21 Uz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram, 22 Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel.” 23 (Bethuel fathered Rebekah.) These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother. 24 Moreover, his concubine, whose name was Reumah, bore Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.

22:1-2 The text states that God “tested” (*nissah*) Abraham (v 1). It was a test of the highest order because it involved the sacrifice of the one whom God acknowledged to be “your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love” (v 2). The preacher will want to recount for his hearers the history behind the birth of Isaac and why God’s command would have been so painful for Abraham. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

Luther echoes the distinction that James draws in the Epistle between tests provided by God and temptations to evil provided by Satan: “[God] does not test in order that we may fear and hate Him like a tyrant but to the end that He may exercise and stir up faith and

love in us. Satan, however, tempts for evil, in order to draw you away from God and to make you distrust and blaspheme God” (AE 4:132). It is both the source and the intended result that distinguishes tests and temptations to evil. In the midst of either, God provides for his people (Ps 50:15). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

Note the repetition of two critical elements in the account: “son,” *ben*, occurs ten times and “provide,” *yirā’eh*, occurs three times. The two are connected through the willingness of God to provide the sacrifice (lamb) so that Isaac, and by extension all people who would be blessed through the continuation of Abraham’s seed (offspring), could live. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

**22:1** *after these things*. Isaac had grown into adolescence or young manhood, as implied also by 21:34 (“a long time”). (CSB)

(literally, “After these things”) may indicate a surprising turn of events. Abraham apparently had security with his promised heir, a political alliance, and a symbol of permanence, but now everything becomes uncertain. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

*tested*. † Not “tempted,” for God does not tempt (Jas 1:13). Satan tempts us (see 1Co 7:5) in order to make us fall; God tests us in order to strengthen our faith (Ex 20:20) or prove our commitment (Dt 8:2). (CSB)

Verb is translated “tempt” elsewhere, but that is not the sense here. One way that faith is strengthened is through trial and hardship. (TLSB)

To test someone’s quality through hardship. When it refers to testing by God, it concerns obedience (e.g., Ex 16:4; Deut 8:2; Jud 2:22; 2 Chron 32:31). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 2)

This was done for Abraham’s spiritual benefit. Abraham’s love for Isaac, right and good though it was, might in time have crowded out his love for God. (PBC)

*Here I am*. Abraham answered with the response of a servant, as did Moses and Samuel when God called them by name (see Ex 3:4; 1Sa 3:4, 6, 8). ) (CSB)

The servant is willing to obey the command whose contents are yet unknown. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 2)

**22:2** *your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love*. In the Hebrew text “Isaac” follows the clause “whom you love,” in order to heighten the effect: “your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac.” Isaac was the “only son” of the promise (21:12). (CSB)

Abraham’s love for Isaac, right and good though it was, might in time have crowded out his love for God. Jesus once said: “Anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:37). In God’s view, Abraham needed an opportunity consciously to put God first. With this test God brought Abraham’s training in faith to a climax. (PBC)

Of course Abraham had another son, Ishmael, but Isaac alone was the son who carried the covenant promise from Gen 12:1-3, reaffirmed in v 17 of our text. Note that the Greek equivalent *monogenas* “only begotten,” is used to refer to Isaac in Heb. 11:17, and is applied to Christ in Jn 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 Jn 4:9. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

*land of Moriah.* The author of Chronicles identifies the area as the temple mount in Jerusalem (2Ch 3:1). Today “Mount Moriah” is occupied by the Dome of the Rock, an impressive Muslim mosque constructed in A.D. 691. A large outcropping of rock inside the building is still pointed to as the traditional site of the intended sacrifice of Isaac. (CSB)

Where Jerusalem and the temple would later be built. (TLSB)

Moriah would become the site of Solomon’s temple (2 Chr 3:1), and Golgotha where God’s Son was sacrificed, was to the west on the same hill. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

*offer him as a burnt offering.* Abraham had committed himself by covenant to be obedient to the Lord and had consecrated his son Isaac to the Lord by circumcision. The Lord put his servant’s faith and loyalty to the supreme test, thereby instructing Abraham, Isaac and their descendants as to the kind of total consecration the Lord’s covenant requires. The test also foreshadowed the perfect consecration in sacrifice that another offspring of Abraham would undergo in order to wholly consecrate Abraham and his spiritual descendants to God and to fulfill the covenant promises. (CSB)

Human sacrifices were likely common among the Canaanites. God’s command seemed to contradict His promises to give many descendants through Isaac. (TLSB)

“Sacrifice him” without indispensable “to me” perhaps implies that God did not intend to demand an actual human sacrifice. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

*burnt offering* - Whole burnt (no part of it was eaten by the worshipers; it was all God’s) offering (literally holocaust), represented one’s complete dedication to God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

The particular sacrifice God asked Abraham to bring is called a “burnt offering,” a blood sacrifice which in the OT symbolized a person’s complete dedication to God. (PBC)

**22:3** *Early in the morning.* Prompt obedience, even under such trying circumstances, characterized Abraham’s response to God (CSB)

After what must have been a sleepless night Abraham got up early,, perhaps so he wouldn’t have to discuss with Sarah the gruesome assignment ahead of him. (PBC)

God’s will is not to be delayed, not questioned but executed. By rising early, Abraham indicated that he would not deny the Lord’s authority but would obey him. It was an act of worship. Abraham must have believed that God would have a resolution to the difficulty. Faith is believing in God and acting on it. The outcome had been hidden so the test could be real and the obedience genuine. The test as a whole was a father’s path of suffering; one can only suffer with Abraham in helpless silence. Obedient silence in his own case contrasts with his protracted intercession for Sodom. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 2)

*saddled* – The sense is not to prepare to ride, but to carry the large amount of wood needed for a holocaust. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

**22:4** *third day*. Three days would be necessary for the journey from Beersheba (see v. 19) to Jerusalem. (CSB)

Abraham had a fifty mile trip ahead of him. God didn't want Abraham's obedience to flow from spur-of-the moment enthusiasm. Three days of traveling gave Abraham plenty of time to think. And we can sure Satan supplied a dozen logical reasons why he should not take the life of his son. (PBC)

Considering time for preparations on the first day and ascending the mount on the third day, this was the expected time for a hike of about 50 miles. Christ's resurrection happened on the third day. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 2)

**22:5** *stay here* – In his personal test, Abraham must be alone, as would Moses on his mountain (Ex. 19:1-13) and Christ, in the desert, in Gethsemane and forsaken on the cross. NOTE: Abraham and Moses weren't truly alone because God was with them.

Abraham believed God would raise Isaac from the dead (Heb 11:19). (TLSB)

*boy*. See v. 12. The Hebrew for this word has a wide range of meaning, from an infant (see Ex 2:6) to a young man of military age (see 1Ch 12:28). (CSB)

Isaac must have been a strong teenager, perhaps 13 years old (cf. 17:25) to be able to carry a large load of wood uphill. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 2)

*come again to you*. Abraham, the man of faith and “the father of all who believe” (Ro 4:11), “reasoned that God could raise the dead” (Heb 11:19) if that were necessary to fulfill his promise. (CSB)

The Hebrew word translated “we will come back” is an emphatic verb form expressing the speakers determination. It hints at the answer Abraham had reached to the awful question that was torturing him: “How can a merciful God cut off the Messianic line?” Abraham's faith answered: “If God commands me to kill Isaac and I obey him, then God is simply going to have to bring Isaac's ashes back to life, and the two of us are going to come back sown this mountain.” (PBC)

**22:6** *on his son* – As Isaac carried the wood for his own sacrifice, so Christ carried his own wooden cross. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

*the fire* – This would be the equipment to produce fire, e.g., flint and tinder. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

*they went both of them together* – Concludes v. 6 and v 8, signifying the most poignant silence in all literature. Isaac was puzzled and Abraham troubled. . (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

**22:7-8** This, the only recorded conversation between Abraham and Isaac, begins in the Hebrew with “my father” and ends with “my son.” This partnership of father and son as offering and victim prophesies that expressed in Is 53:7, 10, and reflects that of the divine Father and Son. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

**22:8** *God himself provide for himself the lamb.* The immediate fulfillment of Abraham's trusting response was the ram of v. 13, but its ultimate fulfillment is the Lamb of God (Jn 1:29, 36). (CSB)

V 8: In answer to Isaac's question, "Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham replies, "God will provide (*yirā'eh*) for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

The question Isaac asks in verse seven must have cut Abraham life a knife. His answer was a combination of considerate love, which spared Isaac the brutal details, and of confident faith, which left the outcome to God. (PBC)

Literally, "God will see for himself." The same Hebrew verb "to see" is used in the sense of God providing, as also in Gen 16:13-14. Abraham's prophetic words point to God himself supplying the only true Lamb who could take away the world's sin. No sacrifice supplied by us humans could accomplish that. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

Abraham's words were first fulfilled by the ram (v. 13). Their ultimate and true fulfillment was the Lamb. (TLSB)

**22:9** *laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.* Isaac is here a type (prefiguration) of Christ. (CSB)

**22:10** *slaughter* – Translates the usual Hebrew verb for "slaughter (in sacrifice)." (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

The climax of the sacrifice is described with abundant detail. To obey God's command Abraham had to disregard everything his heart and his reason told him, and to concentrate totally on God's promise: "My covenant I will establish with Isaac" (17:21). The epistle to the Hebrews helps us to understand Abraham's attitude: (PBC)

<sup>17</sup>"By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, <sup>18</sup>even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." <sup>19</sup>Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death."

If there was a conflict between God's command and his promise, resolving that conflict was God's business. Abraham's business was to put God first and he drew the knife. (PBC)

**22:11** *angel of the LORD.* See note on 16:7. (CSB)

This messenger is the Son of God. (TLSB)

Was a pre-incarnate manifestation of God the Son. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 2)

God provides for Abraham in and through "the angel of the LORD," understood to be the pre-incarnate lamb of God that would later be provided for all people (see *TLSB* [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009], 48). Even more interesting is that this event

takes place on Mount Moriah, where Jerusalem would later be built and where the Lamb of God would be provided and offered once and for all by God for the sins of the world. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

*Abraham! Abraham!* The repetition of the name indicates urgency (see 46:2; Ex 3:4; 1Sa 3:10; Ac 9:4). (CSB)

*Here I am.* The repetition of the name indicates urgency. (CSB)

**22:12** *now I know* – Abraham completed the test. Hilary of Poitiers: “God certainly was not ignorant of the faith of Abraham, which He had already reckoned to him for righteousness” (NPNF2 9:242). Luther: “The statement refers not only to his faith but also his entire worship” (AE 4:134) (TLSB)

*fear God.* A conventional phrase equivalent to “true religion.” “Fear” in this phrase has the sense of reverential trust in God that includes commitment. (CSB)

It includes an absolute fear of doing anything that would displease Him, as well as childlike respect for Him. In the case if the unbeliever only the former is present. Abraham’s behavior at Moriah demonstrated that both were present in his heart. (PBC)

In the NT God-fearers are Gentiles who believed in the God of Israel without becoming full Jewish proselytes. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

*you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.* See v. 16. Abraham’s “faith was made complete by what he did” (Jas 2:21–22). (CSB)

Angel identifies Himself as God. (TLSB)

**22:13** *ram caught in a thicket by his horns* – Ram became the sacrifice. Often seen as a foreshadowing of Christ with His crown of thorns. Tertullian: “Christ... in His times, carried His “wood” on His own shoulders, adhering to the horns of the cross, with a thorny crown encircling His head” (ANF3:171). (TLSB)

*instead of.* Substitutionary sacrifice of one life for another is here mentioned for the first time. As the ram died in Isaac’s place, so also Jesus gave his life as a ransom “for” (lit. “instead of”) many (Mk 10:45). (CSB)

This emphasizes the substitutionary nature of sacrifice and applies particularly to Christ’s sacrifice in our stead (“life as a ransom for many” Mark 10:45) Every animal sacrifice was a substitute for a human. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

**22:14** *will provide* – This was Abraham’s expression of joy and praise. God sees His own in their anguish and provides for them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

Abraham refers to the place where this event occurred as “The LORD will provide (*YHWH yirə’eh*),” and the text then states that to this day it is said, “On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided (*yera’eh*).” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

*mount of the LORD.* During the Israelite monarchy the phrase referred to the temple mount in Jerusalem (see Ps 24:3; Isa 2:3; 30:29; Zec 8:3). (CSB)

**22:16** *I have sworn.* There is no greater name in which the Lord can take an oath (see Heb 6:13). (CSB)

As certainly as He is God, so certainly shall He fulfill His promise. (TLSB)

He swore by Himself, since there is no higher authority. (PBC)

*you ... have not withheld your son, your only son.* Abraham's devotion is paralleled by God's love to us in Christ as reflected in Jn 3:16 and Ro 8:32, which may allude to this verse. (CSB)

**22:17** *I will surely blessed you* – Luther: “There is a twofold blessing; a blessing in words and a blessing in actuality. The blessing in words consists of praises and commendation... The blessing in actuality is truly divine, for when God blesses, the result is the thing itself or that which is said... He is One who blesses with effect and does all things through what He says” (AE 4:155). (TLSB)

He rewarded Abraham's faith by repeating and expanding the Messianic promise. (PBC)

*offspring as the stars of heaven.*

Abraham's descendants as numerous as sand on the seashore, would take possession of the cities of their enemies – a reference to the Israelite conquest of Canaan. (TLSB)

*sand that is on the seashore.* Fulfilled, at least in part, during Solomon's reign (see 1Ki 4:20). (CSB)

*possess the gate of his enemy.* . Lit. “gates.” Taking possession of the gate of a city was tantamount to occupying the city itself (see 24:60). (CSB)

These were where the enemy controlled the whole conquered city. (TLSB)

**22:18** *in your offspring* – Or, “in your seed,” i.e., in Jesus Christ (Gal 3:16). (TLSB)

*all nations on earth will be blessed.* Luther: “For the promise does not depend on my merits or works; it depends on the Seed of Abraham. By Him I am blessed when I apprehend Him in faith; and the blessing clings to me in turn and permeates my entire body and soul, so that even the body itself is made alive and saved through the same Seed” (AE 4:158). (TLSB)

*because you have obeyed my voice.* God blessed Abraham out of His free mercy through faith (15:6), not because Abraham merited the blessing by his works. Nevertheless, his obedience was an external sign of true faith, of which God approved. (TLSB)

When Abraham left Moriah his trust in God's promise was deepened, and his love for his son was purified. (PBC)

*Nahor's Sons*

**<sup>20</sup> Some time later Abraham was told, “Milcah is also a mother; she has borne sons to your brother Nahor: <sup>21</sup> Uz the firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel (the father of Aram), <sup>22</sup> Kesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph and Bethuel.” <sup>23</sup> Bethuel became the father of Rebekah. Milcah bore these eight sons to Abraham’s brother Nahor. <sup>24</sup> His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also had sons: Tebah, Gaham, Tahash and Maacah.**

God’s purposes for Abraham had now been achieved. God had called this man away from his former homeland, from his relatives, from his father’s house. God had given him a promise that, humanly speaking, was unbelievable but had taught him to trust that promise implicitly. And then God let Abraham live to see the fulfillment of that promise. What did life still have to offer Abraham? The closing chapters of the “Account of Terah” show us how God let Abraham end his life in clam contentment of faith, first of all, as he received news from Haran. (PBC)

Half a century had passed since Abraham had left Haran, 500 miles to the north, in present-day Syria. In that time Abraham had most likely lost contact with his only surviving brother Nahor. Now a report reached Abraham about his brother’s family. Nahor had eight sons, one of whom was Bethuel. Of Bethuel’s children only a daughter is named. And here we can see why had Moses insert a brief and incomplete genealogy into the sacred record at this point. For several generations God had been at work to provide a wife for Isaac, the son of the promise. (PBC)

**22:23** *Bethuel fathered Rebekah* – Rebekah, future wife of Isaac, was the daughter of Nahor’s youngest son. (TLSB)

**22:23–24** Abraham’s brother Nahor (see 11:26) became the father of eight sons by his wife and four by his concubine. They would later become the ancestors of 12 Aramean (see v. 21) tribes, just as Abraham’s grandson Jacob would become the ancestor of the 12 tribes of Israel (see 49:28). (CSB)

**Ch 22** The climax of Abraham’s life of faith comes when he who loves his son so much is willing to offer him as a sacrifice to his Lord. Surely Abraham finds great relief when God provides the ram in the thicket. Often we fail tests of faith that do not begin to compare to Abraham’s. Thankfully, there was an even greater sacrifice when God the Father in heaven offered the sacrifice of His beloved Son to secure forgiveness for our failures. • Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us. Amen. (TLSB)