

Abraham had waited for decades for the LORD to fulfill the promise of giving him and Sarah a son and it was only after they were well past childbearing years before this promised son was born. However, the LORD gives Abraham the faith-testing command to take this son for which he's waited decades and give him as a burnt offering in seeming contradiction to the LORD's promises concerning Abraham's descendants.

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### Genesis 21

<sup>1</sup> And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken. <sup>2</sup> For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.

The LORD had set a time for Isaac to be born when He repeated His promise that Abraham would have a son through whom the blessings of the covenant would be passed to Abraham's descendants (Gen. 17:21). The LORD again confirmed the time when He visited Abraham just prior to destroying Sodom and Gomorrah, promising that Sarah would bear a son "according to the time of life" (9 months) from then (Gen. 18:10). The LORD does as He promised and birth occurred when He said it would.

<sup>3</sup> And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac. <sup>4</sup> And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him. <sup>5</sup> And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him.

**"And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac"** – The name "Isaac" means *laughter* and Abraham uses this name that the LORD had given to the child earlier (Gen. 17:19) as a reminder of Abraham and Sarah's reaction to the LORD's promises. They reacted with a mixture of doubt, wonder and joy at the miracle of having a child at their age.

**"And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him"** – The LORD had given circumcision as the token of the covenant between Himself and Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 17:10-14). The command included the directive to circumcise male children when they were eight days old (Gen. 17:12).

**"And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him"** – Abraham was 75 when he entered Canaan (Gen. 12:4) and the command and promise for Abraham to leave for a new land and that his seed would become a great nation had been given even earlier when Abraham was still in Ur of the Chaldees (Gen. 12:1-4). The lesson for us is that God works according to His schedule and many times we have to wait for years to see God's promises fulfilled.

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### Genesis 22

<sup>1</sup> And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.

**"And it came to pass after these things"** – No specific time span is given so we don't know much time had passed. Many commentators believe Isaac may have been a teen at this time, but this is a guess.

**"that God did tempt [to try; to test; to prove] Abraham"** – God was not tempting Abraham to do evil but was giving him a monumental test of his faith. **James 1:13** "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man."

**"and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am"** – God speaks and Abraham instantly responds, ready to listen.

<sup>2</sup> And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

**"And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest"** – Two things of note here: 1) Isaac is described as Abraham's only son – his illegitimate son Ishmael is not considered for he is not the son the LORD had promised to Abraham (Gen. 17:18-21); 2) God acknowledges that Abraham loves his son Isaac, for whom he has waited decades. The LORD wanted to test Abraham to see if he loved God more than his own son.

**"and get thee into the land of Moriah"** – This area is traditionally believed to be the region where Jerusalem is eventually built.

**"and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of"** – The specific mountain is not identified but tradition says that it is the mountain where Solomon's temple will be built. Abraham is commanded to give his son as a burnt offering. The LORD is testing Abraham to see: 1) if he loves God more than his own son; 2) if Abraham will trust God and obey even though this command seems to contradict the earlier promise that it would be through Isaac that Abraham's descendants will come.

**Verses 3-6:** Abraham leaves early the next morning with Isaac, two young men-servants, and the wood for the burnt offering and travels three days until he sees the mountain that the LORD spoke of. Leaving the two men with the ass that had carried the wood, Abraham has Isaac carry the wood while he carries the fire and the knife as the two travel on to the mountain. We can see indications of Abraham's faith when he tells the two young men that he and Isaac would return.

<sup>7</sup> And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here *am* I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering?

As they travel to the mountain, Isaac asks his father a question. He knows that they are going to offer a burnt offering but apparently Abraham has not yet told him any specifics because Isaac notices that they are missing the most necessary element for making a burnt offering. They had brought everything else they needed except for the lamb.

<sup>8</sup> And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

Abraham's trust in God is evident here, for even though he didn't know what God was going to do, he believed that God would provide in some way. Perhaps Abraham meant that "the lamb" that God would provide was Isaac himself who had been provided by God. We get an indication of Abraham's thinking in **Heb. 11:17-19**: "<sup>17</sup> By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, <sup>18</sup> Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: <sup>19</sup> Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." Abraham also did not realize how prophetic his statement was, for God would provide His own Son to be the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29b).

**Verses 9-10:** The pair arrive at the location and Abraham proceeds to build the altar. He then lays the wood on the altar and binds his son and then lays him on the altar. Most commentators believe that at this time Isaac was likely old enough that he could have resisted and even overpowered his aged father but nothing is said about this. Apparently Isaac submitted himself to his father and the will of God. Abraham then takes the knife in his hand and prepares to slay his son.

<sup>11</sup> And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here *am* I.

**"And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven"** – Frequently in scripture "the angel of the LORD" is described as an angel but in reality is the LORD Himself doing the speaking.

**"and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here *am* I"** – As He frequently does, the LORD intervenes at the last minute.

<sup>12</sup> And he 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.

**"And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him"** – The LORD cancels the previous command and now instructs Abraham to not harm Isaac.

**"for now I know that thou fearest [to be afraid; reverence] God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me"** – Did the LORD not know how far Abraham would go in his obedience? Of course He did. Scripture has many examples of God speaking in human terms about things that do not make sense for an omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient Being. The LORD knew that Abraham loved and revered God above his own son but the LORD often has us go through such exercises in order to grow our faith. We all would like to think that we would pass the test as Abraham did, but until we actually go through the situation we do not know and our faith may remain weak. Faith is like a muscle in the sense that it becomes stronger through use.

<sup>13</sup> And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind *him* a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

The LORD did indeed provide for the offering because Abraham sees a ram that "happened" to have his horns caught in a thicket. The ram apparently was not there before the angel of the LORD called out so Abraham understands that he is to use this ram instead of his son for the burnt offering. This introduces the idea of substitutionary atonement, which is the basis of Christ taking our place on the cross and dying for us.

<sup>14</sup> And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.

In Hebrew the name Jehovah-jireh means "the LORD will see" but can also be translated "the LORD will provide." Of course, "Jehovah" is the name of the LORD and "jireh" ("ra'ah" in Hebrew) is usually translated as "see." However, in v. 8 "ra'ah" is translated "provide" when Abraham says "God will provide himself a lamb." Thus, some translations of the Bible render the latter portion of v. 14 as "in the mount of the LORD it shall be provided." It appears that Abraham gave that place on the mountain a name that celebrated the fact that the LORD provided a substitute to take Isaac's place on the altar. This event had such an impact that even as Moses (the author of Genesis) wrote this people still talked about how the LORD provided for Abraham on that mountain.

When considering the fact that the LORD provided a substitute for Isaac, it would be hard ignore the parallel to the rest of us.

**Romans 6:23** says "*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" Each of us deserve death because of our sin but the LORD has provided a substitute to take our place. Jesus Christ, God's Son, has already paid the debt of sin for each of us by giving Himself to die on the cross to provide eternal life to those who come to Him in faith. **John 3:16** "*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.*"