

Christ in all of Scripture

The Gospel of Abraham & Isaac

Genesis 22:1-19

Read the Passage



"The Sacrifice of Isaac"
by Rembrandt
1635

¹Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."²Then He said, "Take now 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."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 the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.⁴Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off.⁵And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you."⁶So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together.⁷But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"⁸And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." So the two of them went together.⁹Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood.¹⁰And Abraham 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!" So he said, "Here I am."¹²And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."¹³Then Abraham lifted his

eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son.¹⁴And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, "In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided."¹⁵Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven,¹⁶and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son—¹⁷blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants 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 rose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.



THE SACRIFICE & DELIVERANCE OF ISAAC

1. Isaac was **the unique and beloved son** of Abraham, for he was the son of promise (Gen 22:2; Heb 11:17).
2. Abraham was required to offer **his son** as a **bloody sacrifice** upon Mount Moriah **in Jerusalem**¹ (Gen 22:2).
3. **On the third day** after Isaac was ordained to suffer death, Abraham and Isaac came to the mount (Gen 22:4). It would be **this day when Isaac would escape death**.
4. Abraham accompanied Isaac **up the hill, laying the wood for the sacrifice upon the back of his son** (Gen 22:6).
5. Isaac asked his father, "Where is the lamb for the sacrifice?" Abraham answered, "**God will provide a lamb**" (Gen 22:7).
6. **On the mount, Isaac submitted to be bound and to lie down upon the wood of the sacrifice to receive the lethal piercing** (Gen 22:10).
7. **God sent an angel to deliver Isaac from death**, and Abraham sacrificed a ram **in the place of** Isaac (Gen 22:13).

THE SACRIFICE & DELIVERANCE OF JESUS

1. Jesus was **the unique and beloved Son** of his Father, for he was the son of promise (John 3:16).
2. God required the **bloody sacrifice** of **his Son** on Mount Golgotha **in Jerusalem** (Matt 27:33).
3. God had **promised to deliver Jesus from the grave on the third day**. It was to be **the day of his triumph over sin and death** (1 Cor 15:4).
4. Jesus **carried the cross of his sacrifice upon his back up the hill** (John 19:16-17).
5. John the Baptist testified about Jesus, "**Behold the Lamb of God** who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29, cf. 1 Cor 5:7).
6. **On the mount, Jesus submitted to be bound and to lie down upon the wood of the cross to receive the lethal piercing** (Luke 23:33).
7. **God sent an angel to raise Jesus up from death**. He had been sacrificed **in the place of** his people (Matt 20:28).

¹ Moriah was a hill near Jerusalem, in the area where Solomon's temple was to be built (2 Chron 3:1).



Prophetic Narrative of the Gospel in the Text

1. Isaac was a mediator of the covenants of promise (Eph 2:12), which respects the promised Seed (Gen 3:15). As such, Isaac was the hope of the world when God told Abraham that he would require his son's life as a whole burnt offering (Gen 22:2). Jesus, who was the True Seed of the Woman (Rev 12:1-5), came through the lineage of Isaac (Matt 1:2). Isaac's slaughter on Moriah would have destroyed God's program of redemption unless Isaac himself was the promised Seed. Abraham would have known that. But Abraham knew that the Seed had power over death. The promised Seed would stand in triumph at last over the serpent in spite of his wounding (Gen 3:15).
2. Abraham does not resist God's strange command to sacrifice his son Isaac. He immediately undertakes to obey, gathering the wood for the sacrifice and heading out to Moriah the next morning (Gen 22:3). Surely Abraham understood that the living God is a God of life and that his nature abominated child sacrifice (Deut 12:31; cf. Deut 9:5, Lev 18:21, Deut 18:10, Psa 106:37, Jer 32:35). That being so, the shocking thing about this narrative is that Abraham offers no protest.

The only reconciliation of Abraham's unquestioning and instant obedience with God's strange command is the one offered in Hebrews. The apostle here appears to read the Hebrew plural verb spoken to the servants who accompanied them, "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there and we will worship and (we) will return to you" (Gen 22:5), as Abraham's reasoned faith that God would raise Isaac from the altar of sacrifice in resurrection (Heb 11:17-19). Abraham knew that Isaac was not the promised Seed, for he rejoiced to see the day of Jesus (Gen 22:14, cf. John 8:56). But certainly he knew more about the means of the redemption that the Seed would work than we might have imagined. In this narrative it is clear that he understood that the Seed would have power over death, just as he had received Isaac as a living son from a dead womb (Heb 11:19).

3. The text would have us understand that Isaac comes under the judgment of death the moment God demands his sacrifice. The fact that Isaac escapes death three days later is significant. Paul said that the Scriptures taught the third day resurrection (1 Cor 15:4), and this text is clearly among them.²
- 4 & 5. The striking scene of the son of Abraham carrying the wood of his own sacrifice up the hill of Moriah is juxtaposed to that of the greater Son of Abraham, who carried the wood of the cross up the hill of Crucifixion! What a tender scene!

But the scene is also instructive, because it is certain that Abraham placed the wood on the back of his son because Isaac was the stronger of the two and was able to bear the weight of the sacrifice. This makes it certain that when Abraham revealed to Isaac that there was no lamb

² See Warren A. Gage with Leah Grace Gage, *Milestones to Emmaus: The Third Day Resurrection in the Old Testament* (Ft. Lauderdale, FL: St Andrews Press, 2015).



because *he was the intended sacrifice* that day, Isaac, as the stronger, had to submit his own will to his father's will that he should be the sacrifice (cf. Luke 22:42). Isaac willingly extended his hands to be bound and willingly lay down upon the wood to receive the piercing of the knife. Isaac, too, had a remarkable faith in his binding that day!

6. Isaac's question, "Where is the lamb for the sacrifice?" is left open in the text in Genesis (Gen 22:7). It is a ram that is offered in the place of Abraham's son (Gen 22:13). Abraham says that nonetheless, God will provide a lamb (Gen 22:8, 14). The question is left open until John the Baptist, in the spirit of prophecy, identifies the Lamb as Jesus. "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)!
7. It seems appropriate that the Lord Jesus, the True Seed of the Woman, as the Angel of the Lord, should himself deliver Isaac from the knife on Moriah (Gen 22:11-12). God the Father, who spared not his own Son, sent his Son to spare Abraham's son that day (Rom 8:32). But it was not only for Abraham's son, rather it was for all of us for whom Jesus was freely delivered over to death so that God could with him freely give us all things! (Rom 8:31-32).

Gospel Takeaways from the Text

1. This captivating scene is a full preview of the suffering and glory of Jesus. It is the gospel. Abraham fully comprehended the full program of redemption before any Scripture was written. God told Abraham that Isaac was to be offered on Moriah, "on one of the mountains of which I will tell you" (Gen 22:2). In the past we have often misunderstood what the patriarchs might have known about the plan of redemption. But clearly they understood far more than we imagine. Moses, we are told, while still in Egypt, evaluated his choice to identify with his people as a choice between the "reproach of Christ and the treasures of Egypt" (Heb 11:24-26). He looked to the reward! Oh that we too would look to the reward and so understand the passing pleasures of sin! For we know far more about the true treasure of heaven, Jesus, than the patriarchs (Heb 1:1-4).
2. Abraham's binding of his beloved son Isaac teaches us to appreciate the sacrifice of the cross in the most authentic way possible. Every parent of a beloved child can empathize with the father of our faith. This scene is a perfect window into the heart of Father God. Here we understand in a deeper sense how God *so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son!*
3. The pathos of this scene on Moriah should encourage our hearts about the incalculable love of God for us. If "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, much more then, having now been justified by his blood, we shall be saved" (Rom 5:8-9).

