

Genesis 22 Bible Study

The passage this week is a hard one. If you were to put yourself in Abraham's shoes, you might not respond the way he did, nor understand a God who would ask such a thing. The answer to this discomfort is to always keep the gospel in sight. So, as we read this passage consider the gift of the Son who God gave for the salvation of the world.

22:1 Sometime after these things, God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am!" Abraham replied. 22:2 God said, "Take your son—your only son, whom you love, Isaac—and go to the land of Moriah! Offer him up there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains which I will indicate to you." (Genesis 22:1-2)

It is no coincidence that Moriah is usually identified as the mountain in Jerusalem where the temple will be built (see 2 Chronicles 3:1); the temple where animal sacrifice will be performed. *What does this relationship make you think about the sacrifice God is asking of Abraham? Does it remind you anything?*

It's a gut-wrenching scene; a man who is faithful to God being asked by his loving God to kill his son to prove his faithfulness, but what a beautiful yet gruesome picture of the future Son who will be sacrificed as proof of His faithfulness.

What is Abraham's response to this command by His Lord? Let's take a look:

22:3 Early in the morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took two of his young servants with him, along with his son Isaac. When he had cut the wood for the burnt offering, he started out for the place God had spoken to him about.

22:4 On the third day Abraham caught sight of the place in the distance. 22:5 So he said to his servants, "You two stay here with the donkey while the boy and I go up there. We will worship and then return to you." (Genesis 22:3-5)

When did Abraham get up?

What does this suggest about his willingness to obey the Lord?

22:6 Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and put it on his son Isaac. Then he took the fire and the knife in his hand, and the two of them walked on together. 22:7 Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father?" "What is it, my son?" he replied. "Here is the fire and the wood," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" 22:8 "God will provide for himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son," Abraham replied. The two of them continued on together. (Genesis 22:6-8)

Why do think it is significant that Abraham put the wood on his son's back? In what way does this remind you of the Father and the Son? (see John 19:17 below)

"and carrying his own cross he went out to the place called "The Place of the Skull" (called in Aramaic Golgotha)." (John 19:17, NET)

As the story progresses the parallels between this father and son (lower case s) and the Father and the Son (upper case S) are consistent. Verse 8 seems to be the most powerful connection of them all. *What is the sense that you get when you read this verse from this perspective?*

22:9 When they came to the place God had told him about, Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood on it. Next he tied up his son Isaac and placed him on the altar on top of the wood. 22:10 Then Abraham reached out his hand, took the knife, and prepared to slaughter his son. 22:11 But the Lord's angel called to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am!" he answered. 22:12 "Do not harm the boy!" the angel said. "Do not do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God because you did not withhold your son, your only son, from me."

22:13 Abraham looked up and saw behind him a ram caught in the bushes by its horns. So, he went over and got the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. 22:14 And Abraham called the name of that place "The Lord provides." It is said to this day, "In the mountain of the Lord provision will be made." (Genesis 22:9-14)

If we continue the imagery of Jesus on the cross, what does this comparison tell us about who sent the Son to the cross? Take a look at verses 9-10.

The imagery of tying up the sacrifice, or binding it, is only seen here in the Old Testament. It may be here for a reason: some say that it might underline the fact that Isaac willingly became the sacrifice. Or it might just recall that Christ too was strapped and hammered to a cross. Yet another parallel to the Son Himself. Jesus tells us Himself in John 10:14-18 that he willingly went to the cross:

*"I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not come from this sheepfold. I must bring them too, and they will listen to my voice, so that there will be one flock and one shepherd. This is why the Father loves me—because **I lay down my life**, so that I may take it back again. **No one takes it away from me, but I lay it down of my own free will.** I have the authority to lay it down, and I have the authority to take it back again. This commandment I received from my Father." (John 10:14–18)*

Without an understanding of the sacrifice of the Son of God, this scene that takes place so much earlier in time becomes a cruel test of a ruthless God, but in light of the gift that it foreshadows it becomes a beautiful insight into the very heart of the Father who would sacrifice His own Son for the sins of the world, and the willingness of the Son to obey the Father, even to His own terrible death.

^{22:15} The Lord's angel called to Abraham a second time from heaven ^{22:16} and said, " 'I solemnly swear by my own name,' decrees the Lord, 'that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ^{22:17} I will indeed bless you, and I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be as countless as the stars in the sky or the grains of sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the strongholds of their enemies. ^{22:18} Because you have obeyed me, all the nations of the earth will pronounce blessings on one another using the name of your descendants.' "

^{22:19} Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set out together for Beer Sheba where Abraham stayed. (Genesis 22:15-19)

Verse 16 starts a very important monologue from the Father to Abraham, important because this is the last thing He will say to Abraham in the book of Genesis. *What does God swear to Abraham in verses 16 – 18?*

Who does God swear by? And why would He do that? (see Hebrews 6:13-20)

Why does He say He is making this oath to Abraham? (verse 18)

This obedience of Abraham is talked about in the New Testament as an example for all believers.

"Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?" (James 2:21, NET)

“Just as Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,”
(Galatians 3:6, NET)

Just like Abraham, we believe God and from that belief comes eternal life: *“For this is the way God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”* (John 3:16, NET)

The gospel permeates all of the pages of scripture. This scene between Abraham, Isaac and the Father is a vivid example of the scene on Golgotha.

If you were like me, and you saw the Bible Mini-series, your stomach wrenched at the idea of offering up your child as a sacrifice. Now, consider that this is just a taste of the anguish the Father would soon feel, offering His Son up as a sacrifice for the world. The world who did not know Him or love Him. (Ephesians 2:4-6) This is an image of the Father, the Father who stops Abraham from having to suffer the pain that He will one day suffer and Isaac from getting a taste of the suffering the Son will one day suffer.

In the Hall of Faith found in Hebrews 11, we see so many who believed God, who sacrificed for Him, surrendered their lives for him, but in spite of all of this, *God had provided something better for us, so that they would be made perfect together with us.*” (Hebrews 11:40, NET) He provided His own Son:

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us (because it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”) in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham would come to the Gentiles, so that we could receive the promise of the Spirit by faith.” (Galatians 3:13–14, NET)

As we read the Old Testament, we are constantly confronted with the fact that the only way we can get to the Father is through the blood, and that the blood that truly saves is the blood of the Son of God offered up for our sins. This should make all of our reading of scripture a constant reminder of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the incredible love he offers us each day of our lives.

This week and in the weeks to come, as you read along through Genesis, remember to constantly look for reminders, or rather foreshadows of the cross, and thank God each time you see them.