

The Book of Genesis

Chapter 22

22:1 Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. (NIV)

Abraham's Test

We are told at the outset that this was only a test, but Abraham did not know that when the actual event occurred.

22:2-3 Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about." Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. (NIV)

His Only Son

God stressed the point that Isaac was Abraham's only son. This was in respect to the fulfillment of the promise He had made that Abraham would father an heir. Ishmael was Abraham's attempt to produce an heir, which was not what God meant. Isaac was to represent Jesus Christ who was the only Son of His Father (JOH 3:16). The births of both Isaac and Jesus were predetermined and miraculous.

Moriah

The name "Moriah" means "chosen by YHWH". The "region of Moriah" was the area of Jerusalem, and according to a tradition recorded by Josephus, the mountain to which God directed Abraham was the same as the one where Solomon later built the temple (2CH 3:1).

Abraham's Location

Abraham was still living in the land of the Philistines at Beersheba (vs 19) and the journey was over 50 miles.

22:4 On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. (NIV)

Third Day

Abraham was forced to think about the death of his only son for three full days, the same amount of time the Father would later deal with the absence of His Son, during the time Jesus was in the grave.

22:5 He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you." (NIV)

Abraham now speaks in faith, "we will come back." This is what Paul has reference to about the faith of Abraham in HEB 11:17-19, "*Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice in faith, reasoning that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.*" (NIV) This occurred three days after he first set out, so Isaac had been dead for three days in Abraham's mind.

22:6-8 Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together. (NIV)

Burnt Offering

Abraham knew that an offering would be made.

22:9-10 When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. (NIV)

Abraham's Faith

According to JAS 2:22 Abraham's faith was made complete by his actions.

22:11-12 But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from Me your son, your only son." (NIV)

Once again in JAS 2:21, "Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?" (NIV) As Paul wrote in HEB 11, Abraham knew God could resurrect Isaac, even though there had never been one brought back from death prior to this time.

God places this same requirement upon all the disciples of Christ (LUK 14:26).

22:13-15 Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided [MOF: "Yahweh-yireh" – "the LORD will provide"]." The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time (NIV)

Confirmation of the Covenant

The first time the angel spoke was to stop Abraham and acknowledge his total commitment to the covenant he made with God. Now that the burnt offering was complete, God confirms His total commitment to the covenant He made with Abraham.

22:16-18 and said, "I swear by Myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed Me." (NIV)

God made the covenant conditional based upon whether Abraham would walk in all His ways (17:1-2). Now that he had passed the ultimate test God makes the covenant unconditional.

"*Your descendants*" is plural, referring to the promise of race: the fulfillment of the promise to make great nations of his physical descendants.

"*Your offspring*" is singular and refers to the promise of grace: the reconciliation of all mankind to God through Jesus Christ. Paul explains this in GAL 3:14,16: "...in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus... The scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ." (NIV)

Abraham's obedience did not earn him the promise of God, but his faith and trust in God's ability showed his willingness to leave the covenant fulfillment to be worked out in God's due time, unlike what happened when he fathered Ishmael.

22:19-24 Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba. Some time later Abraham was told, "Milcah is also a mother; she has borne sons to your brother Nahor: Uz the firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel (the father of Aram), Kesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph and Bethuel." Bethuel became the father of Rebekah. Milcah bore these eight sons to Abraham's brother Nahor. His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also had sons: Tebah, Gaham, Tahash and Maacah. (NIV)

Reason for Nahor's Genealogy

This passage of genealogy is included to show that God had provided a pool of suitable young women from which a wife for Isaac could be chosen. Moses knew the outcome and included Rebekah's name, although at this point, Abraham was unaware of which of his brother's granddaughters would become his daughter-in-law.