

## Genesis 22

**Read Genesis 22:1-2:** This chapter encapsulates the central message in the Bible. It is an image of the future gospel fulfillment. It prefigures Jesus being secured to the cross, as God's perfect sacrifice for us. There are real people living life, and yet playing similar roles to what is happening in heaven. The faithful father (Abraham) takes his most-precious only son (Isaac) to sacrifice. Nothing illustrates love more than this. On a human level, it seems impossible. We are given a hint as to what was going on through Abraham's mind.

*By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,<sup>18</sup> of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called,"<sup>19</sup> concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense. (Hebrews 11)*

Abraham had already been told by God that he would be the father of many nations. That promise can only come true if Isaac somehow survives this sacrifice. He believed that somehow Isaac had to come out of this alive.

Mount Moriah is the same location that the temple would be built in Jerusalem. A thousand years later, David bought the threshing floor of Arunah to build this temple. Moriah means 'a place of God's choosing'.



Why is it that the most loyal saints have the most tests and trials? David's life and death trials seemed to be unending. Joseph's tests went on for years. Job was a shining example of faith who just got pounded. I suppose that we would not know that they were faith stars if they had not been tested.



Abraham has already become our example of faith; and yet he is going to do something even harder? Why?

On one hand, you would expect that loyal saints get a break from all of these setbacks and hardships. After all, that is how positive reinforcement and encouragement works. You could also see how the long-awaited Issac was perhaps over-protected. This experience may have given Abraham more peace of mind to let his son live his life. The Navy Seals training includes a part where you essentially can lose consciousness under water. This builds your trust in the system, instead of just saving yourself.

How would we handle this request from God? Would we think of it as cruel and out of line? Afterall, Abraham had already left his family and walked out into the desert to an unknown place hundreds and hundreds of miles away. Then there was a famine; and he had to move again to Egypt...where he lost his wife to the Pharoah for a minute. I have experienced seasons of life when I felt like I was getting pounded over and over again. I asked God to stop the rain; but it did not stop. I then asked God to make me strong enough to enjoy my life as is. He answered that in a heartbeat. I am discovering that my anticipation and worrying is the worst part. I honestly think that God periodically makes us *man-up*. That is not the same as blocking it out of our mind. It is more like confirming that I have followed God's instructions, and just leaving it in his hands, and not worrying about where this is all leading. God's leadership training includes experiences that seem to lead nowhere...or even towards a loss. God does not want us to abandon our ship, flap our wings or start acting out. He wants us to just calmly pray and put it in God's hands. The spiritual realities around us can be disturbing. We have friends and family members dying of diseases. There are terrorist groups intent on destroying our people. Our society has worsening problems that continue. By nature, we seek comfort and stability.

God wants us to become more in tune with his world. God is trying to get us to a place where these terrors and setbacks are not as consequential to us. He is our future and our joy and our crown.

*After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.” (Genesis 15:1)*

Besides, this place is going to burn up one day.

*10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. 11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, (2 Peter 3)*

It is possible for our blessings to be misused as curses. In effect, Job was set free from his constant worries about his family and his businesses. Similarly, Isaac and Sarah were incredibly precious to Abraham. God forbid that anything would happen to them. They were taken away from him in his tests, so to speak. He got them back, and he also was probably less concerned about their wellbeing.

**Read Genesis 22: 3-8:** Whatever vision God gave Abraham was something that he could recognize from a distance. He must have shown him a mountain silhouette, or something that made it obvious as Abraham was still a way off.

Isaac noticed that there was no sacrifice. All Abraham could say was that God would provide one. This is a picture of the only begotten son willingly laying down his life. Isaac was not a little kid whose dad physically forced him to lay on the altar. Isaac might have been 37, and his dad was 137. Abraham told his workers to stay put and wait. He would return with Isaac. Abraham fully expected that Isaac would somehow survive.

**Read Genesis 22:9-14:** Building an altar was a little bit of work.



Those rocks are not going to be collected and stacked within a couple hours. The altars might be 7' long or so, and over 3' wide, and 3' high. I cannot imagine how Isaac and Abraham felt as he laid on the altar, and was tied down. Was it panic and confusion? What kind of obedience was this on Isaac's part? The eventual relief must have also been amazing, when God provided his ram instead. God never intended to harm the boy. It was just a test of faith. Abraham named this place Jehovah Jireh (God will provide). God provided Jesus, as a sacrificial lamb. Jesus took our place. I have found that if I continue forward, that God opens the way.

The interesting thing about sacrifices is that God has to choose them. When Catholics give up fish or meat or chocolate for Friday night or for Lent, that is a

personal choice. When God cherry picks something to sacrifice that we are clutching tightly it is a different experience.

**Read Genesis 22:15-19:** God shows us that true faith of this level put obedience to God above all things. You cannot outgive God. Abraham thought he was giving a son, and he obtained a huge family.

*“Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?” (Romans 11:35)*

*And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. (Matthew 19:29)*

Most believers do not equate competing interests with where that leaves God. God is supposed to be on the top of our totem pole. Frequently our family or job or finances or past times edge out God. Sometimes God becomes a filler, and we still call that a priority. Even when we force our God commitments into their proper spots, our hearts betray us. Deep down, we can hardly wait to get out of church and go the game or to lunch.

*<sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:21)*

**Read Genesis 22:20-24:** Why was this extended family tree inserted here? It is a lead in for Isaac’s family reconnection and marriage. Everyone else is an idolater. Rebekah is Abraham’s double great niece. Abraham’s brother married his niece of another brother. Lot was Abraham’s nephew. God would eventually have Abraham send his servant to bring a bride to his son.

