

Genesis Chapter 22

Genesis 22:1 "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]."

“God did tempt Abraham”:

The verb “tempt” is better rendered as “proved” or “tested.”

God does not tempt anyone with evil (James 1:13); but in certain instances, he does test, try, or prove us (James 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:6-7).

Therefore, we must assume that the command to sacrifice Isaac was not evil.

God knew what He would do in the end.

He had no intention to permit the murder of Isaac.

The reason God prohibited the Israelites from following the example of Gentiles who offered their own children as sacrifices to their gods (Deut. 12:31), was that such monstrous deeds were in contradiction to the character of the true God.

Abraham’s faith was being tried.

This was the entire purpose of the episode.

One thing about Abraham, he knew God's voice and was always willing to obey God.

Genesis 22:2 "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."

“Take ... thy son ... and offer him”:

These startling commands activated a special testing ordeal for Abraham, i.e., to sacrifice his “only son” (repeated 3 times by God, verses 2, 12, 16).

This would mean killing the son (over 20 years old), and with that, ending the promise of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Such action would seem irrational, yet Abraham obeyed (verse 3).

“Moriah”:

This was in the general area that included the hills on which Solomon later built his temple in Jerusalem (2 Chron. 3:1), the journey was about 50 miles.

You must remember what this son meant to Abraham.

There was a very close to worship situation.

Abraham had lost his son of the flesh.

Notice here, that in God's sight, Isaac was his only son.

God knew how much Abraham loved this son.

That was the very reason this son was what he had to give up.

Whatever, or whomever, we put ahead of God has to be sacrificed (given up), if we are to truly be in right fellowship with God.

This spot, Moriah, is in Jerusalem today.

The custom of the false gods in the area was to do human sacrifice on the mountains.

God would allow this greatest of all temptations to Abraham to see, if in the face of the worst odds possible, Abraham would still worship Him.

This is almost beyond comprehension to us.

Genesis 22:3 "And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him."

There are a number of symbolisms we need to see in this Scripture above.

God sacrificing His only son.

Abraham sacrificing his son.

Jesus rode into Jerusalem on an ass.

The provisions for this sacrifice were carried on an ass.

Jesus died between two men on the cross.

Abraham took two men with them.

Jesus carried a wooden cross.

Isaac carried wood for the sacrifice (wood means worldliness).

Jesus went to Golgotha on orders from God.

Abraham and Isaac went to Moriah in Jerusalem on orders from God.

Jesus obeyed His Father and said, "nevertheless not my will, but thine."

Isaac obeyed Abraham without question.

Genesis 22:4 "Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off."

“Third day”:

With no appearance of reluctance or delay, Abraham rose early (verse 3), for the two day trip from Beer-sheba to Moriah, one of the hills around Jerusalem.

There are all kinds of implications, here.

Isaac was as good as dead these three days.

His dad, Abraham, grieved for him as the disciples grieved for Jesus three days.

Jesus' body, of course, was in the grave three days.

Resurrection was on its way.

Genesis 22:5 "And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you."

“I and the lad will go ... and worship ... and come again”:

The 3-day journey (verse 4), afforded much time of reflection upon God’s commands but, without wavering or questioning the morality of human sacrifice or the purposes of God, Abraham confidently assured his servants of his and Isaac’s return and went ahead with arrangements for the sacrifice (verse 6).

(Hebrews 11:17-19), reveals that he was so confident in the permanence of God’s promise, that he believed if Isaac were to be killed, God would raise him from the dead (see notes there), or God would provide a substitute for Isaac (verse 8).

“Come again to you”:

This was no empty phrase; it was his full conviction based on “in Isaac shall thy seed be called” (see 21:12).

(Hebrews 11:17-19), reveals he was expecting Isaac to be resurrected; thus he would regard him as given back from the dead.

Jesus said I will come again, just as this Scripture says the same thing.

All of this is a parallel to the cross.

At one point, Jesus left the two on the cross, just as Abraham left these two behind.

At some point, Isaac had to realize something strange was going on.

Where was the sacrifice?

Genesis 22:6 "And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid [it] upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together."

"And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering":

Which Josephus says was laid upon the ass, and carried by that.

And if so, he took it from thence.

But it is probable it was carried by his two servants, since it was not more than Isaac himself afterwards who carried it.

"And laid it upon Isaac his son":

Who was a grown man, and able to carry it.

In this also he was a type of Christ, on whom the wood of his cross was laid, and which he bore when he went to be crucified (John 19:17).

And this wood may be also a figure of our sins laid on him by his Father, and which he bore in his body on the tree (1 Peter 2:24).

And which were like wood to fire, providing fuel for the wrath of God, which came down upon him for them.

"And he took the fire in his hand, and a knife":

A vessel in one hand, in which fire was to kindle the wood with, and a knife in the other hand to slay the sacrifice with.

The one to slay his son with, and the other to burn him with.

To carry these for such purposes must be very trying.

This is the first time we read in Scripture of fire for use, or of a knife.

"And they went both of them together":

From the place where they left the young men, to the place where the sacrifice was to be offered.

Genesis 22:7 "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?"

"And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father":

As they were walking together and said, "My father":

A cutting word to Abraham, who knew what he was going to do with him which was so contrary to the relation and affection of a parent.

"And he said, here am I, my son":

What hast thou to say to me?

I am ready to answer thee.

He owns the situation that stood in front of him, a sense of which he had not put off.

And holds his emotions, which must be inwardly moving towards him.

And he showed great strength of faith to grapple with such a trying exercise.

"And he said, behold the fire and the wood":

The fire which his father had in his hand, and the wood which was upon his own shoulders.

"But where is the lamb for a burnt offering?":

He perceived by the preparation made, by the fire and the wood, that it was to be a burnt offering which they were going to offer.

But there being no creature provided for the sacrifice, so he puts this question.

It appears that as yet he was quite ignorant of the true design of this journey, and little thought that he was to be the sacrifice: however, from what he said, it's plain he had been used to sacrifices all along.

That he had been trained up in them, and had seen them performed, and knew the nature of them, and what were requisite unto them.

Here, it appears that Isaac had become aware, as Jesus did at Gethsemane.

Both were a little reluctant to go through with this, but still obedient.

The lamb, as always, stood for the innocence.

Genesis 22:8 "And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together."

Then Abraham, where he meant not, prophesies:

"My son, God will provide himself a lamb":

The Holy Spirit, by his mouth, seems to predict the Lamb of God, which he has provided, and which taketh away the sin of the world.

Verses 9-10

Abraham's preparations to kill his only son could not have placed his trust in God in sharper focus (Heb. 11:17-19).

Genesis 22:9 "And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood."

Abraham lays the wood in order for his Isaac's funeral pile, and now tells him the amazing news.

Isaac, thou art the lamb which God has provided!

Abraham, no doubt, was comforting him with the same hopes with which he himself by faith has been comforted.

The great Sacrifice, which, in the fullness of time, was to be offered up, must be bound, and so must Isaac.

After Jesus had carried the cross to the hill, they laid it down, and Jesus was nailed to the cross.

Jesus was on the altar of sacrifice for us.

Isaac, also, was bound to this wood and laid on the altar.

Genesis 22:10 "And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son."

This being done, Abraham takes the knife, and stretches out his hand to give the fatal blow.

Here is an act of faith and obedience, which deserves to be a spectacle to God, angels, and men.

God, by his providence, calls us to part with an Isaac sometimes, and we must do it with cheerful submission to his holy will (1 Sam. 3:18).

“God will provide” is a phrase that would be immortalized in the name of the place (in verse 14).

Genesis 22:11 "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":

Not a created angel, but the eternal one, the Son of God, who perhaps appeared in a human form, and spoke with an articulate voice.

"And said, Abraham, Abraham":

The repeating his name denotes haste to prevent the slaughter of his son, which was just to the point of doing, and in which Abraham was not slow in doing, but ready to make quick dispatch.

Therefore, with the greater eagerness and vehemence the angel calls him by name, and doubles it, to raise a quick and immediate attention to him, which it did.

“Angel of the LORD” (see note on Exodus 3:2).

This is where all similarity ends.

When Abraham was about to sacrifice his son, there was Someone higher to say don't do this.

He had passed the test.

He was willing to sacrifice the one thing (which was his son), that meant everything here on this earth to him.

He had withheld nothing from God.

God was satisfied.

When Jesus was sacrificed, there was no higher power than His Father.

Genesis 22:12 "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."

“Now I know that thou fearest God”:

Abraham passed the test (verse 1).

He demonstrated faith that God responds to with justification (see note on James 2:21).

This verse indicates that God was certain that Abraham feared (reverenced), Him more than anyone else, since he was willing to offer Him his son.

So, God provided a ram as a substitute for Isaac (John 1:29).

This was a grievous test that Abraham went through.

We can understand better the grief that Father God went through at the sacrifice of His Son.

The sun darkened and the earth quaked in sorrow.

Genesis 22:13 "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."

"In the stead of his son":

The idea of substitutionary atonement is introduced, which would find its fulfillment in the death of Christ (Isa. 53:4-6; John 1:29; 2 Cor. 5:21).

This is the greatest symbolism of Jesus' sacrifice of all.

Jesus is our substitute.

We should have suffered and died on that cross, but Jesus, God's Son, took our place.

God has always provided a substitute.

Genesis 22:14 "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."

"Jehovah-jireh", the LORD will provide, is a deeply significant name.

He who provided the ram caught in the thicket will later provide the atoning victim, Christ Jesus, of which the ram was the type.

In this event, we can imagine Abraham seeing the day of that pre-eminent seed who should in the fullness of time actually take away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

"In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen":

This proverb remained as a monument of this transaction in the time of the sacred writer.

The mount of the LORD here means the very height of the trial into which he brings his saints.

There he will certainly appear in due time for their deliverance.

Verses 15-18

In this formal reaffirmation of His Abrahamic Covenant, the LORD mentioned the 3 elements of land, seed, and blessing, but with attention directed graphically to the conquest of the Land promised (verse 17), "shall possess the gate of their enemies".

Genesis 22:15 "And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,"

"And the Angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time":

The Angel having restrained him from slaying his son, and having provided another sacrifice, which he offered, calls to him again; having something more to say to him, which was to renew the covenant he had made with him, and confirm it by an oath (verses 16-17: 12:1-3; 15:13-18; 17:2, 7-9; Heb. 6:13-14).

Genesis 22:16 "And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only [son]:"

"And said, by myself have I sworn, saith the LORD":

Which Aben Ezra observes is a great oath, and abides forever; because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, his own nature, perfections, and life (Heb. 6:13).

Hence it appears that the Angel that called to Abraham was a divine Person, the true Jehovah.

"For because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son":

Thine only son; that is, from the LORD (as in Genesis 22:12).

And is here repeated as being a most marvelous thing; a wonderful instance of faith in God, and fear of him, and of love and obedience to him.

For, with respect to the will of Abraham, and as far as he was suffered to go, it was as much done as it was possible for him to do, and was looked upon as if it was actually done.

Yet this is not observed as meritorious of what follows: The promise of which had been made before, but is now repeated to show what notice God took of, and how well pleased he was with what had been done.

And therefore renews the promise, which of his own grace and good will he had made, for the strengthening of Abraham's faith, and to encourage others to obey the LORD in whatsoever he commands them.

Genesis 22:17 "That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which [is] upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;"

"That in blessing I will bless thee":

With temporal and spiritual blessings; with the Spirit and all his graces; with Christ and redemption, justification, and salvation by him.

And with eternal life, as the gift of God, through him.

"And in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore":

Both his natural seed, descending from him in the line of Isaac, and his spiritual seed, both among Jews and Gentiles, that tread in his steps (see Genesis 13:15).

"And thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies":

"Gate" for "gates", where courts of justice were held, and which are the security of cities and put for them, and which also include the whole country round about.

So that this phrase is expressive of an entire jurisdiction and dominion over them.

And was literally fulfilled in the times of Joshua, David, and Solomon; and spiritually in Christ, Abraham's principal seed, when he destroyed Satan and his principalities and powers.

Who overcame the world; made an end of sin and abolished death.

And delivered his people out the hands of all their enemies; and in all Abraham's spiritual seed, who are made more than conquerors over them, through Christ that has loved them.

Genesis 22:18 "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."

"And in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed":

That is, in his one and principal seed, the Messiah, that should spring from him (Galatians 3:16), in whom all the elect of God, of all nations under the heavens, are blessed with all spiritual blessings, with peace, pardon, righteousness, and eternal life, with grace here and glory hereafter (see Acts 3:25).

"Because thou hast obeyed my voice":

In taking his son and offering him up unto Him, as much as he was permitted to do.

And thus, honoring God by his obedience to Him, he of his grace and goodness honors him with the promise of being the father of multitudes, both in a literal and spiritual sense.

And with being the ancestor of the Messiah, in whom all the blessings of both grace and goodness meet.

The ministering spirit of the LORD, Himself, spoke to Abraham.

And the LORD swore by Himself, because there was no greater.

He reiterated the blessing again on Abraham.

Abraham had passed the test.

All believers, throughout the ages, would be blessed, because of the faithfulness of Abraham.

Genesis 22:19 "So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beer-sheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beer-sheba."

"So Abraham returned to his young men":

He had left at a certain place with the ass, while he and Isaac went to the mount to worship; and who stayed there till he came to them, according to his order (Genesis 22:5).

No mention is made of Isaac, but there is no doubt that he returned with Abraham, since we hear of him afterwards in his house.

"And they rose up, and went together to Beer-sheba":

That is, when Abraham and Isaac came to the place where the young men were, they got up and proceeded on in their journey along with them to Beer-sheba, from where Abraham came, and where he had for some time lived.

"And Abraham dwelt at Beer-sheba":

There he continued for some time afterwards, and but for a time, for in the next chapter we hear of him at Hebron (Genesis 23:2).

Verses 20-24

“It was told”.

This is clear indication that, despite geographical separation, information about family genealogies flowed back and forth in the Fertile Crescent region.

This update advised most notably of a daughter, Rebekah, born to Isaac’s cousin, Bethuel (see verse 23).

It also reminds the readers that Abraham and Sarah had not lost all ties with their original home.

Abraham’s brother, Nahor, still lived back in Mesopotamia, though he had not seen him for about 60 years.

Genesis 22:20 "And it came to pass after these things, that it was told Abraham, saying, Behold, Milcah, she hath also born children unto thy brother Nahor;"

"And it came to pass, after these things":

Abraham's taking his son Isaac to the land of Moriah, building an altar on one of the mountains there, and laying him on it with an intention to sacrifice him.

And the offering of a ram in his stead, and the return of them both to Beer-sheba.

"That it was told Abraham":

By some person very probably who was lately come from those parts where the following persons lived.

Though Jarchi suggests this was told him by the LORD himself and while he was thinking of taking a wife for Isaac of the daughters at Aner, or Eshcol, or Mamre.

And to prevent which the following narration was given him.

"Behold Milcah, she hath also borne children unto thy brother Nahor":

As Sarah, supposed to be the same with Iscah, a daughter of Haran, had borne a son to him, and whom he had received again as from the dead.

So Milcah, another daughter of Harsh, had borne children to his brother Nahor, whom he had left in Ur of the Chaldees, when he departed from thence.

And who afterwards came and dwelt in Haran of Mesopotamia (see Genesis 11:27).

Genesis 22:21 "Huz his firstborn, and Buz his brother, and Kemuel the father of Aram,"

The first of these gave name to the land of Uz, where Job dwelt, and who seems to be a descendant of this man (Job 1:1).

And from whom sprung the Ausitae of Ptolemy, who dwelt near Babylon and by the Euphrates.

The latter, was the father of the Buzites, of which family Elihu was, that interposed between Job and his friends (Job 32:2).

"And Kemuel the father of Aram":

Not that Aram from whom the Syrians are denominated Arameans, he was the son of Shem (Gen. 10:22).

But one who perhaps was so called from dwelling among them, as Jacob is, called a Syrian (Deut. 26:5).

Or he had this name given him in memory and honor of the more ancient Aram.

From this Kemuel might come the Camelites, of which there were two sorts mentioned by Strabo, and who dwelt to the right of the river Euphrates, about three days' journey from it.

Genesis 22:22 "And Chesed, and Hazo, and Pildash, and Jidlaph, and Bethuel."

"And Chesed":

From whom it is generally thought sprung the Chaldees, who are commonly called Chasdim; but mention is made of the Chaldees before this man was born, that is that unless they are called so by anticipation.

"And Hazo, and Pildash, and Jidlaph, and Bethuel":

Of these men and their posterity we don't hear anymore, excepting: the last, for whose sake the rest are mentioned.

Hazo or Chazo settled in Elymais, a country belonging to Persia, where is now a city called Chuz after his name, and from whence the whole country is called Chuzistan.

And the inhabitants of it are by the Assyrians called Huzoye or Huzaeans, the same which Strabo makes mention of under the name of Cossaeans, who are described as a warlike people, inhabiting a barren and mountainous country, and given to spoil and robbery.

Genesis 22:23 "And Bethuel begat Rebekah: these eight Milcah did bear to Nahor, Abraham's brother."

"And Bethuel begat Rebekah":

Who was to be and was the wife of Isaac; and, for the sake of her genealogy, the above account is given, as Aben Ezra observes, and so Jarchi; and this is observed to pave the way for the history of the chapter; for no notice is taken of any other of Bethuel's children but her, not even of Laban her brother:

"These eight Milcah did bear, to Nahor, Abraham's brother":

This is observed, and the exact number given, as well as their names, to distinguish them from other children of Nahor he had by another woman.

Genesis 22:24 "And his concubine, whose name [was] Reumah, she bare also Tebah, and Gaham, and Thahash, and Maachah."

"And his concubine, whose name was Reumah":

Not a harlot, but a secondary wife, who was under the proper and lawful wife, and a sort of a head servant in the family, and chiefly kept for the procreation of children; which was not thought either unlawful or dishonorable in those times such as was Hagar in Abraham's family.

"She bare also Tebah, and Gaham, and Thahash, and Maachah":

Of whom we have no account elsewhere; only it may be observed, that here Maachah is the name of a man, which sometimes is given to a woman (1 Kings 15:13).

"Kemuel":

Means assembly of God.

"Bethuel":

Means the abode of God.

Rebekah was actually what all the above was about, because she would at last become the wife of Isaac.

She was a cousin actually, but in those days (as it is now), it was very important not to marry a heathen person.

Genesis Chapter 22 Questions

1. Who tempted Abraham?
2. When God called, what did Abraham say?

3. Who did God ask Abraham to sacrifice?
4. Where?
5. Did God count Ishmael as Abraham's son?
6. What kind of an offering was Isaac to be?
7. What do we have to give up to follow Jesus?
8. What type of worship service did the false gods require in this area?
9. Where were their services held?
10. Who went with Abraham and Isaac?
11. What did they carry to use on the altar?
12. How does this symbolize the cross?
13. Moriah is where?
14. What stands out clearly in both Jesus and Isaac toward God and Abraham?
15. How many days were they on the trip?
16. What was Isaac for these days?
17. What is all of this paralleled to?
18. Isaac carrying the wood to Mt. Moriah symbolized what?
19. What has the lamb always stood for?
20. What symbolized Jesus being nailed to the cross?
21. When did all similarity end?
22. What is the greatest symbolism of all in this?
23. What does "Jehovah-jireh" mean?
24. Why did the LORD swear by himself?
25. Through whose seed shall all the earth be blessed?
26. What does "Kemuel" mean?
27. What does "Bethuel" mean?

28. Why was Rebekah so important in this?