

LECTURE IX

19/05/2025

Introduction

Let me summarise what we have learned from the life of Abraham and his family.

We have looked at key events in his life and their significance within the context of the BIG PICTURE – the Story of Redemption progressively revealed in the OT.

¶ **CALLING – Genesis 12:1-3**

Land, seed, king – rule = kingdom.

Who is the seed? **Galatians 3:16.**

Connect to Matthew's genealogy.

Nations to receive the blessings – **Galatians 3:6-9**

¶ Threats to kingdom – **chapter 12**- Abram moves to Egypt – foreshadows the later enslavement in Egypt – Exodus – plagues, deliverance and riches.

¶ Lot not the seed – Genesis 14, 19.

¶ The true High Priest foreshadowed in Melchizedek – **Genesis 14** [See **Hebrews 7/8** for redemptive significance.]

¶ God enters into a covenant with Abram – **Chapter 15** -

It is not a covenant of works or law – it was given before the law, indeed 430 years before.

Galatians 3:15f

It is a covenant of Grace – curse – God assumes the curse – **Galatians 3:10-14, 15**

This is the blood of the New Covenant.

¶ **Genesis 16** – 2 Mothers, 2 sons, two cities – 2 ways of salvation. Paul interprets this in **Galatians 4:22f.**

SEE EXTRA NOTES BELOW.

¶ The sign of the Covenant – **Genesis 17.**

Important principle of interpretation of OT – symbol – shadow [OT]
NT – reality – the shadow fulfilled – apply to circumcision.

True circumcision.

Circumcision was more than an outward rite – it pointed to the new birth – for the blessings of the covenant are only for those who are spiritually reborn through the Holy Spirit.

Deut 10:16, 30:6, Jeremiah 4:4, Romans 2:26f. Galatians 6:15, Philippians 3, Colossian 3:11f.

¶ Principle of substitution – Genesis 22.

EXTRA NOTES ON GENESIS 16

GALATIANS 4:22

SCRIPTURE READING: Genesis 16

TITLE: *The story of two mothers and two sons.*

INTRODUCTION.

Today we come to the story of Isaac, Abraham's son which is recorded in Genesis 16-21.

The question that naturally arises in this series of messages is: What role did Isaac play in the unfolding of God's plan of salvation?

We have seen that the Bible and the OT in particular is not a random collection of stories [*with morals attached*] or just a historical record of the experiences of the people of God in the past – it traces the unfolding of God's plan of salvation, his plan to restore all things effected by man's sin, in and through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We call this the '**Big Picture**' or the '**Story-line**' or the plot of the Bible.

Once you have identified the plot, then everything else falls into place.

In other words, everything in the OT points to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We saw that God put this plan in motion when he called Abraham and promised

(Gen 12:3) I will bless anyone who blesses you, but I will put a curse on anyone who puts a curse on you. Everyone on earth will be blessed because of you.

The blessing would come through the coming deliverer, the promised seed, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Abraham believed God and in this way he also became the prototype of salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, coming back to the question: What is Isaac's role in God's plan of redemption?

Now when you read the story of Isaac's life in Genesis, it is not easy to understand how he fits into this big picture.

Of course, we know that Isaac was the first of the line of promise, that he had two sons, one of whom was the line of promise, then we have Jacob who had 12 sons, but even when we get the end of Genesis, we are no nearer to a nation or a land – in fact we have a total of 70 people now living in Egypt.

It is Paul who explains the significance of Isaac in God's plan of salvation.

Let's read about it in **Galatians 4:21-31**

You will recognize the incident that Paul refers to in **Genesis 21:8-13**.

Now Paul tells us he is using this story as an **allegory**.

An allegory is not a fable or a myth – it is a true historical incident that illustrates a spiritual truth.

It is like a picture that foreshadows or points to a NT reality.

What Paul claims here is that this incident concerning Sarah and Isaac, Hagar and Ishmael was in fact an illustration or foreshadowing of salvation by grace.

In fact, it shows us the contrast between salvation by works, or the law and salvation by grace.

Perhaps to explain this passage we need some background.

CONTEXT.

Paul's letter to the Galatian church was probably his first letter.

It was in Paul's first missionary outreach that he preached the gospel to the Galatians.

He preached that salvation was open to all who believe and that salvation was by grace and not by works, neither religious rituals like circumcision nor by observing the law.

That was the gospel he preached and which they accepted and were saved.

However, soon after Paul left them, a group of Judaizers [*Jewish Christians who believed that to be full Christian one had to be circumcised and observe Jewish customs and laws*], arrived at the church and claimed that Paul had preached only half a gospel.

The Galatian Christians who were Gentiles still needed to be circumcised and had to observe the law.

They were not saying that faith in Christ was not required, but that it was **not enough**.

This threw them into confusion, and some were circumcised and began to observe the law.

When Paul heard what happened, he was furious and immediately wrote this letter.

He pulls no punches in this letter.

Paul knew what was at stake.

Chapter 1:6-7. Chapter 3:1-3

Obviously for Paul this was not just a peripheral issue, this Christ plus circumcision and the law was another gospel and could not be tolerated for notice what he says in 2:21

'...for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing'.

In other words, you make a mockery of the cross.

Any gospel that add anything to faith in Christ is not a gospel.

Martin Luther and the **Reformers** understood the issue, for them it was not enough to speak salvation through faith in Christ; it is faith in Christ ALONE that is sufficient for salvation.

Starting in **chapter 3**, Paul contrasts salvation by grace and salvation by the law.

He brings his argument to a close in chapter 4:21-5:1.

It is during Paul's argument that he shows us what is ours in the Lord Jesus Christ, our position, status and privileges as Christians.

I have said before and I will repeat it, the problem with many Christians is they have never really grasped or understood what ours is when we come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the result is they have not experienced or entered into the joy, the peace and freedom of their salvation.

So, they either settle into some dull routine of going through the motions or they are ever looking for something more, some new experience, some novel teaching that will propel them into a higher spiritual level.

The problem is we do not understand who we are and what we already have in Jesus Christ.

The story of Isaac, as explained by Paul in Galatians teaches us what an amazing thing it is to be a Christian believer.

It points to two marvelous blessings which are ours in Jesus Christ – Freedom from bondage, Sonship for slavery – these are a summary of all the blessings of our salvation.

The first blessing of our salvation is that we have been FREEDOM FROM BONDAGE.
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Now, in this passage Paul draws our attention to two of Abraham's sons, Ishmael, and Isaac.

We know from chapter 25, that Abraham in fact had eight sons in all.

But Paul singles out Ishmael and Isaac because they were meant to prefigure salvation by grace and salvation by works.

- There is firstly, Hagar's son Ishmael.

The story of Ishmael's birth is found in **Genesis 16:1-4, 15.**

Now notice how Paul stresses the fact that Ishmael was the son of a slave woman – **verse 22.**

Secondly, Paul associates her with the Old Covenant, and Mount Sinai – an obvious reference to the Law.

She is also associated with Jerusalem, with the temple and the sacrifices and rituals.

Read 24-25.

The two sons and their mothers represent 2 religions; a religion of bondage, which is Judaism and a religion of freedom, which is Christianity.

The point Paul is making is that Ishmael was the child of slavery, of the Law, of works – he was the child of bondage.

- Next Paul draws our attention to Isaac.

Paul calls him the child of the free woman – **verse 22.**

Isaac symbolizes the Jerusalem above = the spiritual Jerusalem = the Church – **verse 26.**

He is the child of blessing – **verse 27.**

He is the child of Promise – **verse 28.**

What is Paul's point?

'You are children of freedom not children of slavery and bondage'.

These Judaizers wanted to bring the Galatian believers under the law again.

Paul insists that in Christ, believers are set free from the law's requirements – **Chapter 5:1.**

He has already shown that the law cannot save us, it is not a way of earning acceptance with God – it is not the way of salvation – **Galatians 3:10-12.**

The law can only bring a curse, it cannot bring blessing.

It places us under bondage.

Why? Because those who want to live by the law, must keep it perfectly, which no one can.

But, for us there is no longer any curse – **Galatians 3:13-14.**

Christ took the curse – he saved us from the penalty of the law, which is its curse – he took our punishment, he suffered in our place.

We are therefore free from the law.

A radical change has taken place in our position in relation to the law – we no longer live in the realm of the Law – we live in the realm of the Spirit, which is the realm of freedom.

That is firstly a **positional change** which means that God no longer looks at us through the law – he sees us in Christ.

We are finished completely with the Law – it no longer applies to us.

We are freed from the penalty of the law.

See Romans 8:1.

'Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus'.

Paul sees in Isaac the prototype believer – born of the free woman – not a slave.

As Isaac was in a totally different position from Ishmael, so we are in a totally different position spiritually.

Now, the problem in the Galatian church was they could not see this – they believed in Christ, but to be full Christians they believed one needed something more – one needed the law – one needed to be circumcised.

We easily fall into the same error – we accept that works do not save us, the law does not save us, but then we forget this and live as if we are sanctified by the law, by our works.

So we fall into the trap of legalism – do this, don't do that.

We subconsciously think God's acceptance of us rests on how victorious we are – how strong we are – how disciplined we are in our devotions, our good works for the Lord.

We stop focusing on what Christ has done for us.

We live as slaves not free people.

We focus on what we can do for Christ.

But our freedom goes further – not only freed from the Penalty of the law – also the power of the law.

Look at **Galatians 5:16** – point – we are not freed to live sinful lives – in fact, we are freed to live holy lives.

We live in a new sphere – no longer in the sphere of the law, but in the sphere of the Spirit

II Corinthians 5:17

(2Co 5:17) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have disappeared, and-look!-all things have become new!

A new sphere of existence – to be 'In Christ'.

Living in this new sphere we have a new power within us.

Something has happened to us – something radical.

The OT calls it the law bring written on our hearts.

We now have a new outlook, new desires, there is new life – the life of the Spirit.

We are changed and a new power is at work in us.

(Eph 1:17) I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father most glorious, would give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation through knowing Christ fully.

(Eph 1:18) Then, with the eyes of your hearts enlightened, you will know the hope of his calling, the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, (Eph 1:19) and the unlimited greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his mighty strength, (Eph 1:20) which he put to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realm.

(Eph 2:5) We have been made alive with Christ

(Eph 2:6) raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavenly realm in Christ Jesus,

(Eph 2:10) For we are his masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus for good works that God prepared long ago to be our way of life.

(2Pe 1:4) Through these he has given us his precious and wonderful promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature,

seeing that you have escaped the corruption that is in the world caused by evil desires.

(1Jo 3:9) No one who has been born from God practices sin, because God's seed abides in him. Indeed, he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born from God.

(Eph 3:20) Now to the one who can do infinitely more than all we can ask or imagine according to the power that is working among us-

(2Pe 1:3) His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through the full knowledge of the one who called us by his own glory and excellence.

Let me sum this up – the way to transformation [sanctification] is not observing laws and regulations – trying to make ourselves good enough – we must stop looking at ourselves, but realize who we are, realize the truth about ourselves and then go and live it out.

We can do all things through Christ.

We are being changed from one degree of glory to another degree of glory.

Paul could say with confidence.

(Phi 1:6) being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ,

(1Th 5:23) And may the God of peace Himself sanctify you, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blamelessly at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(1Th 5:24) Faithful *is* He who called you, who also will do *it*.

But we come to consider the second blessing which is ours as Christians FULL SONSHIP.

We cannot read the account in Genesis without realizing that Isaac was special although Ishmael was a legitimate son of Abraham and in fact was the eldest.

Abraham had other sons – but we are left in no doubt about Isaac's special position, the special object of his father's love.

It was not a matter of favouritism as it was with Esau and Jacob or as it was in the case of Joseph.

Through Isaac God was revealing to us the unique status of believers.

Isaac was the son of promise – Galatians 4:23b

'For it is written that Abraham had two sons – the son of the free woman was born as the result of a promise.'

Isaac birth was supernatural whereas Ishmael was born naturally

Galatians 4:23a 'His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way...'

Galatians 4:29 'At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit.'

Now Paul does not mean that Isaac was conceived by the Holy Spirit as Jesus was, but that the Holy Spirit miraculously enabled Abraham and Sarah to have a son when humanly speaking it was impossible.

Notice that Paul applies this to believers in verse 28

'Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise'.

We too are supernaturally born which is what John tells us in John 1:12 (Joh 1:12) But all who have received Him, to them--that is, to those who trust in His name--He has given the privilege of becoming children of God;

(Joh 1:13) who were begotten as such not by human descent, nor through an impulse of their own nature, nor through the will of a human father, but from God.

It is Isaac who received the inheritance proving that he was the legitimate and full son of Abraham.

Galatians 4:30 "But what does the Scripture say: 'Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son'."

And Paul applies this to all believers.

Galatians 3:7 Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham'.

Galatians 4:31

'Therefore brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.'

Paul's point is that believers are full sons of God, supernaturally born of the Spirit.

What does sonship mean?

Paul explains this in the earlier part of Galatians.

3:26

'You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus...'

3:29

'If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.'

Read 4:1-5

What Paul means is the OT saints, although children of God were like minors – they did not enjoy the full rights of sons until Christ came.

Now that Christ has come, we are in a superior position to the OT saints – we are full sons – God treats us as full, adult children.

Galatians 4:6-7 – Proof of our sonship is the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit gives us a consciousness of our sonship.

We have the same thought in Romans 8:15-17

(Rom 8:14) For all who are led by God's Spirit are God's children.

(Rom 8:15) For you have not received a spirit of slavery that leads you into fear again. Instead, you have received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

(Rom 8:16) The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

(Rom 8:17) Now if we are children, we are heirs-heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if, in fact, we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Notice that we will share in the promised inheritance, the full blessings of our salvation.

We are meant to see in the way Abraham treated Isaac, our position before God.

We already have received a down payment of our inheritance.

(2Co 1:22) who has placed his seal on us and has given us the Spirit in our hearts as a down payment.

He has already forgiven us.
He has already given us a free pardon – no condemnation.

He has already transferred us from Satan's power and put us in the kingdom of the Son.
We have already passed from death to life.
We already have eternal life.
We are already sons of God.
God is already conforming us to the image of his son.

And this is just the beginning – much more is to follow as John states in I John 3 where he marvels at the love God has lavished upon us as his children.

'How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall see be like him, for we shall see him as he is.'

That inheritance is being kept in heaven for us as Peter states, (1Pe 1:3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in His great mercy has begotten us anew to an ever-living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance imperishable, undefiled and unfading, which has been reserved in Heaven for you, whom God in His power is guarding through faith for a salvation that even now stands ready for unveiling at the End of the Age.

CONCLUSION

We are not just forgiven, not merely justified – we are sons of God, we belong to the family of God, we are born supernaturally, we are free.

God is now our Father who in Christ has accepted and forgiven us.
We no longer fear him, dreading the punishment we deserve; we love him, with deep filial devotion.

We are neither prisoners, awaiting the final execution of our sentence, nor children, minors, under the restraint of a tutor, but sons of God and heirs of his glorious kingdom, enjoying the status and privileges of grown-up sons.

This is what we are now, and we should always think of ourselves in these terms – freed from the law, from both its penalty and its power.

Living in a new sphere of existence – the sphere of the Holy Spirit who has changed us, written the law on our hearts, and given a new power and ability to live holy lives.

That power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is indwelling each of us, changing us, transforming us, even now and one day the Holy Spirit will complete that transformation when we will be free of sin altogether.

That is our present and future positions.

We are already full sons of God.

There is already an inheritance awaiting us.

We will one day share in our Lord's glory.

That glory is so wonderful that Paul could say (Rom 8:18) Why, what we now suffer I count as nothing in comparison with the glory which is soon to be manifested in us.

So it does not matter what may be happening in without or within – our position is assured.

My dear friends, have you seen yourself like this?

Have you understood that this is true of you if you have trust and continue to trust the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is true of the humblest child of God.

SCRIPTURE READING: Genesis 22

TITLE: God's great love demonstrated in a strange story.
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INTRODUCTION.

As I have repeatedly said, the whole of the Old Testament points to Christ, his coming into the world, his life, his death, his resurrection and ascension and his return.

In fact, the Bible is the story of redemption, which is centred on our Lord Jesus Christ.

This story is woven into the whole of the Old Testament in the form of ceremonies and rituals like the Tabernacle with its sacrifices and the priesthood, in the form of actions, like the Exodus and in people, like Joseph, Moses and David.

In these ways God was revealing his great plan of salvation in Jesus Christ – he was revealing pictures of that salvation.

In other words, the Old Testament should never be separated from its complete fulfillment in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the way our Lord interpreted the Old Testament as we can see when he spoke to those 2 despondent disciples on the day of his resurrection.

Turn to Luke 24:25-27

LK 24:25 He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Christⁿ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

Later when Jesus met all his disciples we read,

LK 24:44 He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

LK 24:45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

It was the way the N.T. writers interpreted the Old Testament – look at Matthew for example.

Now I would like to look at one specific incident in which we have a preview of the Atonement.

Turn to Genesis 22 – it is a well-known story.

But before we look at chapter 22 let me fill you in on some background.

BACKGROUND.

Let me remind you that God appeared to Abram [as he was then known] while he was still a pagan worshipping other gods [Joshua 24:2].

GE 12:1 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.

GE 12:2 "I will make you into a great nation
and I will bless you;

I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.

GE 12:3 I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you."

GE 12:4 So Abram left, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran.

In fact, according to Acts 7:2, God appeared to him even earlier.

In Genesis 15:4-5 God confirmed this promise of a seed and a land and in Genesis 17 we see that God covenanted to keep his promise.

Abraham and his wife, Sarah waited and waited, for 25 years and naturally sometimes losing all hope until when it was humanly impossible for them to have children, a son was born.

E 21:1 Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised. ² Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. ³ Abraham gave the name Isaacⁿ to the son Sarah bore him. ⁴ When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. ⁵ Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

From the moment when Abraham first stooped to take the tiny baby in his arms, the child became at once the delight of his heart.

His love for Isaac was not hard to understand because he had waited so long for this child of promise.

And as Abraham watched him grow from babyhood to young manhood, the bond must have grown closer.

But then one day, God gave Abraham a shocking command.

GE 22:1 Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

GE 22:2 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."

Notice Abraham's immediate obedience – **Genesis 22:3**.

And Abraham rose early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son. And he split the wood

for the burnt offering, and rose up and went to the place of which God had told him.

What arguments or dialogue Abraham had with God that night, we do not know.

He must have questioned God's command.

The incongruity of it all must have flooded his heart and soul. Yet, he obeyed and by morning the issue was settled.

He had experienced the faithfulness of God too often to doubt him now.

And so, for three long days, Abraham and Isaac journeyed towards Mount Moriah - **Genesis 22:4**.

Then on the third day, Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off.

What was the purpose of this test?

Of course, it was a test of Abraham's faith in God – did he trust God and did he love God supremely?

Over the years, since leaving Ur, God had tested Abraham's faith many times, but never like this.

This was the most severe test he ever faced and would ever face again.

How poignantly Genesis describes the scene.

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."

GE 22:6 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, ⁷ 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?"

GE 22:8 Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.

We are not told about Abraham's terrible struggle as Isaac asked him that innocent question – that ambiguous answer must have broken his heart.

This incident stands as a supreme test of Abraham's faith in God.

Isaac was the one link to the future, the sign of God's promise, God's Covenant.

What God was commanding Abraham was to literally cut the lifeline that would be the channel through whom God had said he would carry out that promise.

God was commanding him to offer the only son in whom his descendants would become a multitude of nations - in fact, to destroy the divine promise itself.

God was, in effect saying, *"Do you trust me for the future?"*
"Is your trust in the future, focused on me, or in Isaac?"

Abraham had learned his lesson well - he had no doubt about God's promise.

God had kept his Word over all those years and so Abraham did not hesitate.

He obeyed, showing that his faith was not in the future, but in the God who holds the future.

In **Hebrews 11:17-19** we have a commentary on this.

By faith Abraham, being tested, offered up Isaac. And he who had received the promises offered up his only-begotten *son*, of whom it was said that in Isaac your Seed shall be called, concluding that God *was* able to raise him up, even from *the* dead, from where he even received him, in a figure.

Now let us continue with the story in Genesis 22:9f

GE 22:9 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. ¹⁰ Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

GE 22:12 "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."

GE 22:13 Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ramⁿ caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ 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."

GE 22:15 The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time ¹⁶ and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ 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, ¹⁸ and through your offspringⁿ all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

GE 22:19 Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba.

But there was more than just a test of Abraham's faith, it was a preview of God's plan of redemption – God's plan for the salvation of mankind.

Here God was showing that salvation would be effected through a substitutionary sacrifice.

You see, Isaac was part of a greater promise - the promised deliverer of **Genesis 3:15**.

GE 3:15 And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspringⁿ and hers;
he will crushⁿ your head,
and you will strike his heel."

The Covenant that God made with Abraham - **Genesis 12**.

The ultimate child of promise would be Jesus, the Son of God.

The parallel is mentioned by Paul in **Galatians 3:16**.

And to Abraham and to his Seed the promises were spoken. It does not say, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, "And to your Seed," which is Christ.

Here God was showing that what he commanded Abraham to do, he would do 2000 years later.

He would faithfully fulfill his promise - God fulfilled that promise to the last detail.

Our Lord's coming would be in the fullness of time - **Galatians 4:4**

But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, coming into being out of a woman, having come under Law,

There are a number of references in Genesis 22 that point to the greater sacrifice on Mount Calvary.

1. Notice the emphasis on Son - only Son - whom you love.

GE 22:2 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."

12b Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

16 "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore.

This is the first time the word 'love' is mentioned in the Bible, and it is significant that it is not mentioned in connection with the love between a man and a woman, a mother and her children, or even man's love for God, but a father's love for his son.

It may seem strange until we realize that we have here a beautiful picture of the God the Father's love for his Son.

Notice the number of times God's love for the Son is emphasized in the Gospels:-

Mat 3:17 And lo, a voice from Heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Mat 17:5 While he yet spoke, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them. And behold a voice out of the cloud which said, This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear Him.

Joh 17:24 Father, I desire that *those* whom You have given Me, that they may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me, for You have loved Me before *the* foundation of *the* world.

Abraham's experience of being called to sacrifice his only beloved son was a picture of God's sacrifice of his only beloved Son.

2. Notice the spot chosen for the sacrifice - Mount Moriah.

It was the place where the temple would be built and where many sacrifices would be made - all of which were only types - like Isaac of the greater sacrifice, the perfect sacrifice.

3. Notice Abraham's reference to the Substitute Lamb.

Gen 22:7 And Isaac spoke to 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?

8 And Abraham said, My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering. So they both went together.

Abraham did not understand the full significance of his statement.

He did not know fully the extent of the Lamb that God would provide.

A thousand years later the prophet Isaiah wrote,

Isa 53:7 He was oppressed, and He was afflicted; yet He opened not His mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before its shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth.

Two thousand years later, John the Baptist announced,

Joh 1:29 The next day John sees Jesus coming to him and says, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

Joh 1:35 Again, the next day afterward, John stood with two of his disciples.

36 And looking upon Jesus as He walked, he says, Behold the Lamb of God!

Isaac was not sacrificed – he did not die – God provided a sacrifice – pointing to the fact that God provided a sacrifice for us.

He stood in our place.

Isa 53:5 But He *was* wounded for our transgressions; *He was* bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace *was* on Him; and with His stripes we ourselves are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, each one to his own way; and Jehovah has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

1Pe 2:24 Christ himself carried our sins in his body to the cross, so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness. It is by his wounds that you have been healed.

1Co 11:24 gave thanks to God, broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in memory of me."

4. Notice Isaac's obedient submission.

Isaac must have been willing to be sacrificed.

He must have willingly submitted himself to his father.

He did not argue.
 He did not resist.
 He did not run away.

Indeed, he carried the wood for the sacrifice himself and he allowed his father to tie him to the altar.

Isaac's attitude was a preview of our Lord's willingness,
 Isa 53:7 He was oppressed, yet when he was afflicted he opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.

Our Lord went to his death even carrying his own cross until utterly exhausted he fell under the weight of the cross-beam.

5. Notice, too Abraham's belief in Isaac resurrection.

Heb 11:19 Abraham reckoned that God was able to raise Isaac from death---and, so to speak, Abraham did receive Isaac back from death.

6. Summary.

Here then we have a picture, a symbol or a type of what God himself would do on Calvary.

The offering of Isaac was a picture of the offering of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In this story we are allowed to look, as it were into the very heart of God.

We can feel what Abraham felt like - his anguish and sorrow - is that what God felt like when he sent his only Son to the cross for our sin?

God saved Abraham from the ultimate sorrow.

GE 22:12 "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."

But God did not save himself from the ultimate sorrow and pain.

This narrative points to the cross.

But even more, it points to the cost to the Father.

Of course, we focus on our Lord's sacrifice, the cost to the Son, his sacrifice and His suffering when he became a curse for us – when he bore our sin – when he experienced the full brunt of the Father's wrath for sin.

But – what about the cost to the Father?

What about his suffering and pain?

What about his sacrifice?

We must never think that the Father was on one side punishing his Son and the Son was on our side taking our punishment.

The Father suffered no less than the Son – it cost him too – the cost was giving up his Son – and not sparing his Son – punishing his Son.

That is the focus of this narrative.

Paul in Romans 8:32, has this in mind when he writes,

Truly *He* who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

Here Paul is pointing to the cross, as the supreme expression of God's love, and the point he is making is that there can be no danger of God's love for us ceasing or diminishing.

It is significant that the wording he uses is taken directly from the Greek Translation of Genesis 22:11

Spared not (*ouk epheisato*). old verb used about the offering of Isaac in Gen 22:16.

How much did God love his only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord?

We'll look at Abraham's love for Isaac – then multiply that by infinity and you've still not plunged the depth of the Father's love for his Son.

Yet, he gave his Son for us – his enemies, sinners, and rebels.

We have the same thought in John 3:16 – For God SO loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.

Abraham was willing not to spare his own son – but God commanded him to be spared.

By contrast, God's own Son, the Son he loved – was not spared.

Though he was his only Son, his dearly beloved Son, he did not spare him suffering and humiliation – he delivered him up for us all.

Look at our Lord in the Garden pleading with the Father

Luk 22:41 And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw. And He kneeled down and prayed, 42 saying, Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me. Yet not My will, but Yours be done.

43 And an angel appeared to Him from Heaven, strengthening Him.

44) And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly. And His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Did the Father spare him? No.

At Calvary there was no ram caught in the thicket that could replace the Son of God.

There was no one to halt the downward thrust of the knife into the heart of his beloved Son.

You see, it was not man who caused our Lord his suffering – it was the Father.

It was the Father

Isa 53:6 Jehovah has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

10 Yet it pleased Jehovah to crush Him; to grieve Him; *that* He should put forth His soul as a guilt-offering.

God kept nothing back and the Son submitted himself willingly.

God wounded him.

God punished him.

God turned from him even as he bore our sin.

God smote him.

God struck him.

God put him to grief.

That is why our Lord in the terrible moment of dereliction cried out in anguish 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'

God had to forsake him and turn from him because at that moment he became sin and there was only one way to save us – God had to turn his back on him – we can put it like this if God did not turn away from him, he could not punish his Son.

That forsaking was an essential part of the punishment we deserved.

Now who was it that God gave him up for?

For us all.

God loved his Son beyond measure – but to secure our salvation – he was prepared to give him up – to deliver him up – to punish him – to pour out his wrath upon him – for us.

Amazing love,

