

## Lesson 38

# **Abraham's Test**

Abraham loved God more than he loved his promised child, Isaac.

# Overview

## Lesson Focus

God called Abraham to offer Isaac, the son of promise, as a sacrifice. Abraham acted in faith, obeyed God, and continued to trust his promise. In the end, God provided a ram in Isaac's place. We see in this account a foreshadowing of Jesus Christ and the salvation God promises through him.

## Key Passages

Genesis 22:1–3, 22:7–8, 22:13

## Memory Verse

Genesis 12:1–2 Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go . . . to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing."

## Prepare to Share

### Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

"The Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did to Sarah as he had promised" (Genesis 21:1). God kept his promise of a son for Abraham and Sarah and fulfilled the covenant and promise previously made to Abraham (Genesis 17:7). This was the child of promise. It was through his seed that the line of the Messiah would come.

Abraham was one hundred years old when Isaac was born (Genesis 21:5). And he celebrated the birth of this long-awaited son (Genesis 21:8). But this celebration would quickly turn somber.

Genesis 22 records one of the most moving accounts in the Old Testament. God determined in his wisdom to test the faith of Abraham: "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you" (Genesis 22:2). How heartbreaking this must have been! Yet Abraham, demonstrating his complete confidence in God, on the very next morning, saddled his donkey, took his son, his servants, and the wood for the burnt offering, and began his journey (Genesis 22:3).

The faith and obedience shown by Abraham is seldom seen more vividly than it is during this test. He demonstrated it when he spoke to his servants, "I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you" (Genesis 22:5). This statement—that they would come back—revealed that Abraham believed

God would keep his word and if necessary, bring his son back to life (Hebrews 11:17–19). Again, Abraham exhibited amazing faith when, as the trip neared its conclusion, Isaac asked his father, “Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” (Genesis 22:7). Abraham replied, “God will provide for himself the lamb” (Genesis 22:8). Abraham was fully prepared to obey and offer his son, but it also appears that somehow he knew the principle of substitutionary sacrifice—and that is where his hope was. Perhaps he had heard the record of Adam’s sin and how God had covered their nakedness and shame with the skins of the dead animals in the garden.

On the mountaintop, the moment came: Isaac was on the altar built by his own father; Abraham raised the knife to present to God the ultimate act of obedience—the death of this precious son promised so long ago (Genesis 22:9–10). Then the angel of the Lord called, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me” (Genesis 22:12). Abraham had passed the test. His trust was absolute, his obedience complete. And God provided a ram for the sacrifice (Genesis 22:13). Here the angel of the Lord confirmed again the Abrahamic Covenant—the land, the descendants, and the blessings that would be fulfilled through Abraham (Genesis 22:15–18).

How blessed we are to see in this historical account a clear foreshadowing of the perfect sacrifice, provided by God himself—Jesus Christ, “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29)! He alone is worthy to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing (Revelation 5:12)! He is the only one able to offer forgiveness and hope for eternity to all who will sincerely repent of their sins and turn to him in total trust and obedience.

## **Historical/Apologetics Background**

As we consider the amazing display of obedience in Abraham and the merciful intervention of our holy God, we also see God’s omniscience and sovereignty as he weaves his plan of redemption in Jesus Christ throughout all of Scripture. This account of Abraham and Isaac is just one such example.

When God called Abraham to Mount Moriah, he knew exactly what would occur in this sacred place in the future. Years later, in this same region, God would appear to David and stop the plague that would beset Israel in retribution for David’s disobedience against God (1 Chronicles 21:14–15). Later, near this mountain, David’s son Solomon would build the house of the Lord (2 Chronicles 3:1) where God would allow limited access into the most holy place by the High Priest—once a year—into his presence (Leviticus 16:2). And then, in the culmination of God’s eternal plan, Jesus Christ himself would be offered near this place as the perfect sacrifice and final atonement for the sins of everyone who would believe.

The significance of this demands reverence toward our all-knowing God. For on this mountain, where God provided a ram for Isaac as his sacrifice—God also provided the only Lamb whose blood is able to ransom a people for God from every tribe, language, people, and nation (Revelation 5:9).

We know that the actual Abrahamic Covenant included Abraham's leaving his family and his home and journeying to a place the Lord would show him. God also promised a great nation, a great name, and many blessings (Genesis 12:1-2). The culmination of this covenant would be the birth of Jesus Christ—a descendant of Abraham—the one through whom all nations would be blessed (Genesis 18:18).

However, this covenant was foreshadowed at the very beginning—in the garden of Eden. Even as God was pronouncing the curse, he was also offering the hope of victory over death and sin. "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15). Below is a brief glimpse of the history of this amazing covenant:

Genesis 3:15 God promised a Redeemer in the garden of Eden

Genesis 12:1-3 God presented his covenant to Abram

Genesis 12:4-5 Abram and his family began their journey

Genesis 17:1-27 God changed Abram's name to Abraham and promised him a son

Genesis 26:3-5 God confirmed the Abrahamic covenant to Abraham's son—Isaac

Genesis 28:13-15 God confirmed the Abrahamic covenant to Isaac's descendant—Jacob

Genesis 45:7-8 God preserved the people of Israel and led them to Egypt through Jacob's descendant—Joseph

Genesis 49:10 The Messiah was promised through another of Jacob's descendants—Judah

1 Chronicles 2:1-15 King David descended from the tribe of Judah

2 Samuel 7:1-17 The Davidic Covenant was established—the line of David would rule forever

Luke 1:31-33 Jesus will receive the throne of David and will reign over the house of Jacob forever

Do you see God's faithfulness, omniscience, mercy, grace, and sovereignty through this historical account encompassing thousands of years and woven perfectly throughout the history of the world? We serve an awesome God. "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever" (Romans 11:36).

# Limited License to Reproduce

A limited, non-exclusive, non-transferable, nonsublicensable license is hereby granted to a single local church or organization to print copies of the PDF materials in the Teacher Digital Resources if 1) you are the original purchaser; 2) you are using the copies for noncommercial purposes (such as for teaching in class) exclusively within your single local church or organization (multi-campus churches, and national/regional denominations are not covered under this license); and 3) you follow the instructions provided in the curriculum pertaining to the printable materials.

This license is for the specific purchaser of the product and does not include affiliated groups or organizations, or other churches or groups in the same denomination as the purchaser, not identified as the actual purchaser. There is no limit to the number of printed copies for use within the single local church or organization which is the actual purchaser. None of the material in this curriculum may be reproduced for any commercial promotion, advertising, or sale of a product or service, or to share with any other persons, churches, groups, or organizations.

The media (audio/video) portions are copyrighted and duplication is prohibited. This license is for materials in the Teacher Digital Resources only and does NOT include reproduction rights for pre-printed teacher books, student guides, student take home sheets, or posters, except on an emergency basis when purchased quantities are not sufficient for a given week.

## Bible Version

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.