



International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

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Genesis 22:1-14 English Standard Version March 4, 2018

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, March 4, 2018**, is from **Genesis 22:1-14**.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

(Genesis 22:1) After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

Some think God tested Abraham to show Abraham the depth of his faith and trust in God; much as a teacher may give a test to show the student whether or not they have mastered the subject taught. After many clear demonstrations of God's faithfulness to him, from his test Abraham would learn how far he had come in trusting God and His promises completely with respect to each person in his family, especially his son, Isaac. When God called to Abraham, he answered as a servant would answer his master, or an employee would answer his employer: "Here I am, ready to do what you ask."

(Genesis 22:2) He said, "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."

Immediately, God gave Abraham a command, without giving him any reason why He wanted Abraham to do this. Did Abraham have enough experience with God to believe that God had good reasons to ask him to do things without God needing to explain to Abraham why He wanted him to do this? Yes. Abraham would prove that he would obey God without question; such was his faith in the goodness of God. His was not a leap of faith in God or “in the dark” without prior evidence of God’s love and faithfulness, for God had proved His love for Abraham and his family many times before this test.

(Genesis 22:3) Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded 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.

Abraham did not argue with God or demand an explanation because God had proven His love and holiness to him personally in previous events and in the history of his ancestors. Abraham knew that God always kept His promises, so Abraham obeyed immediately. Abraham did not blindly obey God, for he knew the moral character of the One who commanded him to make his sacrifice. Abraham also took two witnesses who could testify regarding this event, because the Bible teaches: “In your law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is valid” (John 8:17). They would see and hear Abraham express his trust in God up until he and Isaac went up the mountain, and they would see them again after they came down from the mountain, and they would be told what happened on the mountain. Furthermore, Abraham and Isaac (two witnesses) could tell them what happened on the mountain immediately after the event while their memory was fresh.

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

For three days Abraham and Isaac walked together. During this time, Abraham may have been tempted to change his mind about doing what God asked, surely the devil may have tempted him to disobey God. Some might argue that his first resolve to obey God could have weakened over a three-day period, so the test needed to be over a few days to prove his obedient faith in God. During their travel time together, Abraham did not tell Isaac all that the LORD had commanded him to do (see Genesis 22:7). Abraham probably knew that Isaac's faith in God was not strong yet, but it would be made stronger after their worship together. Abraham may have spent a great deal of time affirming for Isaac the love God and he had for Isaac, and the fact that God had made promises to him and what those promises meant for the future of them both, because Isaac was "the child of the promise." He probably tried to build up Isaac's faith in God prior to his sacrifice, so Isaac could trust in God no matter what happened. Since we have no record of Isaac pleading with Abraham as he raised his knife, Isaac must have come to a sincere trust in God and his father that all would be well.

(Genesis 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."

Abraham told his two witnesses to remain a short distance behind (perhaps the donkeys could not proceed further). He told them three things: **we** will go, **we** will worship, and **we** will return. They could easily remember that Abraham promised this about both Isaac and himself. Abraham knew that God had made previous promises regarding the future of Isaac, that Isaac would have children that would lead to Abraham having many descendants. Based on God's promises, Abraham knew that God would arrange somehow for them to return following their sacrificial worship; for God had promised, "But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this season next year" (Genesis 17:21); and "But God said to Abraham, 'Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is

through Isaac that offspring shall be named for you” (Genesis 21:12). Abraham trusted in God and he believed these promises.

(Genesis 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,

Jesus Christ carried the wood, His cross, to His sacrificial death on a hill that some identify as Mount Moriah, where Abraham was to sacrifice Isaac, who also carried the wood for the sacrifice. Both God the Father and Abraham loved their sons (see Genesis 22:2). Isaac carried what he needed to obey his father. Jesus carried what He needed to obey His heavenly Father. Just as Abraham walked with Isaac up to the place of sacrifice, Jesus’ heavenly Father walked with him on the road to crucifixion.

(Genesis 22:7) 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?”

Finally, Isaac asked about the sacrifice, because there was no lamb for the sacrifice. Abraham did not bring a substitute lamb with him in case he changed his mind. Isaac apparently trusted that his father, Abraham, would find or buy a lamb for the sacrifice along the way, but as they neared the place of sacrifice his father still had no lamb. Abraham must have shown his love for Isaac and his confidence in God as they were going to worship so Isaac felt no need to ask this question before they began to climb the mountain. Abraham showed no distrust in God; no grief over losing his son in sacrifice; for Abraham trusted completely in God and His promises to him.

(Genesis 22:8) Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them went on together.

For God to keep His previous promises to Abraham (see this commentary on Genesis 22:5), God would need to either raise Isaac from the dead (which Abraham knew God had the power to do) or God would need to provide a lamb as a substitute for Isaac. Abraham believed God and had probably prayed fervently that God would provide a substitute for his son, Isaac, so he would not need to go through the pain of dying before God raised him from the dead. In the New Testament, we read this explanation: “By faith Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac. He who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only son, of whom he had been told, ‘It is through Isaac that descendants shall be named for you.’ He considered the fact that God is able even to raise someone from the dead—and figuratively speaking, he did receive him back” (Hebrews 11:17-19). Abraham knew that God would not accept any substitute that he himself could provide in the place of Isaac: God alone would need to provide the lamb as a substitute. Similarly, God did not accept the sacrifice of Cain when he disobeyed God in the sacrifice he offered instead of what God required, which was a lamb (see Genesis 4:1-4). Abraham knew that God alone could provide an acceptable substitute, and Abraham believed that God would provide the lamb. In a similar way, God provided Jesus as the sacrificial substitute for us, so we do not need to die for our sins if we place our faith in Jesus the Messiah as our substitute.

(Genesis 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.

God showed Abraham where to go, and as Abraham had to take some time to collect the stones and build the altar (probably with Isaac’s help), he had time to rethink and be tempted to back out of offering Isaac at the last minute. Perhaps in prayer he reminded God of His promises to him as he prepared his altar. He prepared Isaac for sacrifice exactly as he would have prepared any lamb for sacrifice. The Bible does not tell us what Isaac was thinking or saying, but we have no record of his crying out in protest;

perhaps that shows us the depth of his faith in God and in his father, that God would provide a lamb as his father had told him. We do know that this event had a tremendous effect upon Isaac, for God's name became "the Fear of Isaac," which Isaac's son, Jacob, used as a title for God and swore by: "If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been on my side, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God saw my affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked you last night" (Genesis 31:42). In addition, "May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor" — the God of their father — "judge between us." So Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac" (Genesis 31:53).

(Genesis 22:10) Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

Abraham did all that God commanded. By raising the knife, Abraham sacrificed his son in his mind and heart exactly as God commanded him. God looked upon the intention of Abraham's heart to obey God in faith, so God required nothing more of him. God looks upon the intentions of our hearts to serve God, even if we may be prevented from doing all that we would like to do for God because someone or something prevents us. God credits our sincere intentions to obey Him. We do not know why God seems to wait until the last minute sometimes, but He does so for good reasons and perhaps to test our faith and show us how strong our faith in and love for God truly is.

(Genesis 22:11) But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.

When God called to Abraham, he answered once again as an obedient servant. The "Angel of the LORD" is often identified with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, before He was born in human flesh. It is fitting that He should be the One to stop Abraham and provide the lamb for him, knowing that no lamb could be substituted for Him when He offered himself as a sacrifice for us, the sacrificial Lamb of God. By

offering himself, God could uphold the integrity of His holy law of love and keep His promises to save His people from their sins and the eternal consequences of their sins. In the New Testament, we read, “She [Mary] will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). And Jesus promised, “for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:28).

(Genesis 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.”

Surely, Abraham and Isaac both rejoiced to hear God’s command, and both learned from God directly why Abraham had raised his knife. They would be the two witnesses to God’s stopping Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac and God’s providing the lamb. Fear can be translated, “reverential obedience,” which Jesus also manifested when He obeyed His heavenly Father. Faith always results in reverential obedience, because in God we trust, just as Abraham trusted.

(Genesis 22:13) 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.

Abraham did not see the ram, the male sheep, until he took his eyes off the son he loved. And, God did not miraculously provide the lamb until Abraham had demonstrated his faithful obedience: this was a true test. The LORD did provide the lamb, just as Abraham had promised his son, Isaac (see Genesis 22:8). God confirmed Abraham’s trust in God and Abraham’s promise to his son, which would help build up Isaac’s faith in God and his father after a fearful experience.

(Genesis 22:14) 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.”

The place on the mountain was named, “the LORD will provide,” because God did this in true human history and the Holy Spirit inspired Abraham to give the place this name as part of God’s redemption history that pointed to the sacrifice of Jesus, God’s only Son, that God provided for us. When Jesus died on the cross as our Substitute, He fulfilled this prophecy of Abraham’s (and the prophecy of others), “On the mount of the LORD, it shall be provided.” For this reason, and others, God does not require any parent to sacrifice their children. In the Old Testament history, God always condemned the human sacrifices that the false gods of Israel’s neighbors required of their servants. We too are called by God to trust and obey as did Abraham and Jesus, for there is no other way to have an eternal and happy relationship with God our heavenly Father.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Describe the type of faith a person must have to obey God immediately and without question?
2. How can people develop and maintain the strong type of faith that Abraham demonstrated?
3. Why do you think God tested Abraham?
4. If you were Abraham, what might you have talked with Isaac about during your three days journey and climb up the mountain?
5. If you were Isaac, how might you have felt from the time Abraham raised his knife to the time God provided the lamb as a substitute? How might this experience have an effect upon your faith?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.

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