

Genesis 21-22: The Birth and Offering of Isaac

GENESIS 21:1-8 SARAH'S JOY AT THE BIRTH OF ISAAC

v1 And Yahweh visited Sarah: She was strengthened to conceive: **Gen 17:19,21; 18:10,14; Heb 11:11.** The chapter begins with "And" indicating a connection to the events of the previous verses in **Gen 20:17-18.** This is a turning point for Sarah. Her faith is strong now. She realised that the angel knew her inmost thoughts. She has seen the destruction of Sodom. But most of all she has seen that if her husband's prayers could open the wombs of Abimelech's house, then why couldn't Abraham's prayers do the same for her? **Yahweh did unto Sarah as He had spoken:** Because faith had come! Elizabeth says to Mary, "Blessed is she that believed" because of "those things which were told her from the Lord": **Lk 1:45.** Faith came first! **At the set time:** God does not delay. There is a **set time** for His purpose to be fulfilled: **Gal 4:4; Psalms 102:13.** Sarah represents Zion who one day will arise with joy surrounded by children: **Isa 40:9-11; Zech 8:5. v3 Isaac:** Means *laughter*, as do believers rejoicing in hope: **Phil 4:4.**

v4 Circumcised his son Isaac: See notes on **17:2,10. Eight days old:** Eight being the number of perfection. All flesh will be cut off in the eighth millennium: **Rev 20:12-15. v6 God made me to laugh:** Her initial laughter of doubt changed to one of faith, pointing forward to the Kingdom age: **Isa 65:18. All that hear will laugh:** Those who rejoice in hope of the glory of God: **Rom 5:2.** Mary also exclaims, "all generations call me blessed": **Lk 1:48.** Zion sings for joy because of her children: **Isa 54:1,** following **Isa 53:8-10:** "who shall declare his generation? ...he shall see his seed." Sarah's laugh is the basis for Jerusalem's exaltation in the Kingdom age: "Rejoice and be glad with her and rejoice for joy with her": **Isa 66:10** cp. **65:18-19!** Jerusalem is the "mother of us all" which is symbolised by Sarah in **Gal 4:25-27.**

v7 Sarah should have given children suck? Plural! Her mind had already soared into the future, to those who would be children of faith by Divine power: **Rev 7:9.** Isaac was a prototype of a whole generation to come, miraculously begotten by God's Word: **1 Pet 1:23-25.**

GENESIS 21:9-11 SARAH'S ANGER AT ISHMAEL'S MOCKING

v8 Child grew, and was weaned: Most likely 3 yrs old: **2 Chr 31:16. v9 The son of Hagar the Egyptian mocking:** **Gal 4:29** "He that was born after the flesh persecuted him born after the spirit." The context of **Gen 20** suggests this may have been to do with his parentage, as Sarah had been in Abimelech's house prior to Isaac's conception. Jesus was also taunted about his parentage: **Jn 8:48.** Hagar is called "the Egyptian" to emphasise the influence of parents on their children.

v10 Cast out this bondwoman and her son: In **Gal 4:29-30** Paul says these words are "Scripture". Sarah's thoughts were the thoughts of God Himself. Isaac was the promised seed by miraculous begetting, and Ishmael rejected that: **Prov 22:10** "Drive out the mocker, and out goes strife; quarrels and insults are ended" NIV. We must drive out things from our homes that detract from spiritual thoughts. Similarly the Kingdom of God was to be taken from natural Jews and given to faithful Gentiles: **Mt 21:43; 1 Pet 2:9. Shall not be heir:** Never any doubt in Sarah's mind! This is cited in **Gal 4:30** in relation to the allegory, where Hagar represents the Old Covenant. This is considered in the final summary on *Abraham in the New Testament.*

v11 Very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son: In **21:10** it was "her son". Abraham is grieved but he knows this is God's will. God was also grieved when he cast out his natural son Israel in AD70. Paul expresses God's feelings regarding Israel in **Rom 9:2-4:** "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart".

GENESIS 21:12-21 ISHMAEL IS BANISHED THEN PROTECTED

v12 In Isaac thy seed be called:

Cited in **Rom 9:7** to prove that the call of the gospel is based on faith. Also cited in **Heb 11:18. v13 Of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation:** God softens this tragedy for Abraham by a promise for Ishmael. **He is thy seed:** However, God does not describe Ishmael as Abraham's "son". Israel will be redeemed for "the fathers' sakes": **Rom 11:28.** Similarly we are saved for "Christ's sake": **Eph 4:32; Acts 13:38-39. v14 Abraham rose up early:** Only recorded 3x in Scripture: **19:27; 21:14; 22:3.** All 3 occasions

were times of desperate emotional concern for others. **And sent her away:** Very difficult thing for Abraham to do. **v15-17** God call him "lad" 6x: **21:12,17,17,18,19,20,** but unlike Isaac in **Gen 22,** never the "son". Like Israel, he was a child of the flesh, but beloved for the father's sake: **Rom 11:28. v18 I will make him a great nation:** Refers to Arab nations who become great in God's Kingdom: **Isa 60:6-7.** In terms of the allegory in **Gal 4,** the promise relates to natural Israel, who become great in God's Kingdom: **Mic 4:8; Ezek 37:21-22; 48:29. v20-21** The final statement in the story is that he marries an Egyptian.

GENESIS 21:22-34 ABRAHAM'S COVENANT WITH ABIMELECH

Abimelech sought to enter into covenant relationship with Abraham. He knew Abraham was a prophet: **20:7,17.** As such he invited him to dwell with him in peace: **20:15.** He now seeks closer recognition, and Abraham shows that this is conditional upon him accepting the covenant, as his Amorite friends did previously: **14:13.** This is typical of the future when nations are incorporated into God's Kingdom through the Abrahamic covenant: **Zech 14:16; Rev 11:15: 14:6-7.**

GENESIS 22:1-5 ABRAHAM'S TRIAL IN JERUSALEM

Genesis 22 is one of the most emotional chapters in the Bible. It tells of God's salvation plan through Christ. Refer to the *Background and Overview* introduction. **Genesis 22** must be read alongside **Psalms 22,** a Psalm repeatedly cited in the NT at Christ's crucifixion: **Mt 27:39-43; Mk 15:29; Jn 19:23-24; Heb 2:12. v1 God did tempt Abraham:** RV "test". Same Heb word translated "prove" in **Ex 15:25; 16:4.**

v2 Thine only son Isaac: First time the Hebrew *Yachid* is used in the Bible. Also **22:12,16.** Used of Jesus Christ in **Psa 22:20:** "deliver your only one" (KJV tr. "darling"). The final *Yachid* in the OT is **Zech 12:10** where at the devastation of Armageddon Jews look upon God "whom they have pierced" and will "mourn for him (Jesus), as one mourneth for his only (Yachid) son." cp. **Jn 19:37. God felt pain** in giving His Son! Isaac is called his **only son** even though he also had Ishmael. A true son of Abraham is one who reflects his character: **Lk 3:8; Jn 8:39.**

Whom thou lovest: **Isa 42:1; Mt 3:17; 17:5; Jn 17:23; 1 Jn 4:7.**

Moriah: An area around Jerusalem where the temple was later built: **2 Chr 3:1-8,** today dominated by the Dome of the Rock. The first time Jerusalem (Salem) appears is **Gen 14:17-20** where he meets Melchizedek. It is God's city: **Ex 15:17; Psalms 137:5-6.** In **1 Sam 17:54** David took Goliath's head to Jerusalem because this is where Jesus was



to face his "goliath" in his victory over sin: **Psa 8; Lk 22:41-44; 23:46. Burnt offering:** Christ: **Eph 5:2; Heb 9:14. 1.** Offered freely and voluntarily: **Lev 1:3; Jn 10:17-18; Phil 2:5-8. 2.** Offered whole: **Lev 1:9.**

GENESIS 22

6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and ¹laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

7 And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, ²Here 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 went both of them together.

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 ³laid him on the altar upon the wood.

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

11 And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.

12 And he said, ⁴Lay 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.

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.

14 And Abraham called the name of that place ⁵Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.

15 ¶ And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, **16** And said, ⁶By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:

17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed ⁷as the stars of the heaven, ⁸and as the sand which is upon the sea ⁹shore; and thy seed shall possess ¹⁰the gate of his enemies;

18 ¹¹And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; ¹²because thou hast obeyed my voice.

Colour code: Blue (God and Jesus Christ); Red (sin/devil/judgment of wicked); Green (Kingdom); Orange (important words & phrases); Purple (return of Jews to the land); Yellow (practical exhortation).

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GEN 22:6-8 A WILLING SACRIFICE

v6 Together: Father / son relationship inspires us emotionally to respond to God's love. This offers an insight into the crucifixion: **Isa 41:8-10; Lk 22:43.**

A loving family environment enhances our relationship with God: **Deut 6:7; Isa 42:6; 49:15; 50:4-5; 1 Tim 3:4.**

v7 His Father: Jesus cried *Abba Father*, like a child calling "daddy": **Mk 14:36.** The Father heard: **Heb 5:7-9.** The lamb: Christ: **Jn 1:29; Rev 14:1.**

v8 God will provide: He names the place after this principle: **22:14.**

GEN 22:9-14 FAITH TRIUMPHANT

v9 Altar: See notes on **12:7.** At this point Isaac is aware of the reason for their journey and was fully co-operative.

v10 Slay his son: Heb 11:17-19 KEY VERSES! His belief in resurrection was instrumental in his obedience. He believed Isaac would be resurrected!

v12 Not withheld thine only son: Jn 1:14; Rom 8:32. v13 Ram only: Protector of the flock. Heb. *strength.* Both Isaac and the ram represent Christ.

v14 Yahweh-Yireh: Meaning *Yahweh will provide.* In Mt Zion will it be seen: **Psa 132:13-14; Deut 33:19.**

GEN 22:15-19 PROMISE CONFIRMED

v16 By myself have I sworn: Paul expounds this in **Heb 6:13-15.**

v17 A repetition and accumulation of the promises made in **12:2-3; 12:14-16; 15:5; 17:1-5.** Originally the promise was conditional: **12:2-3.** Now it is unconditional, and is frequently re-emphasised: **Gen 24:7; 26:3; 50:24; Ex 13:5,11; 33:1; Psalms 132:11; Micah 7:20; Lk 1:73. Stars:** Divine glory: **Dan 12:3.** The final fulfilment is future but the promise has been partially vindicated: **Rev 1:7; Deut 1:10-11.**

KEY VERSES: **Rom 8:32; Gal 3:26-29.**

v18 Thy Seed: Cited **Acts 3:25; Gal 3:8. A singular seed,** Christ: **Gal 3:16.**

Final Fulfilment: **Num 14:21; Psalms 72:17; Isa 2:2-4; 61:11; Jer 3:17; Dan 2:44; Zech 14:5,9; Rev 11:15; 21:1-7.**