

SACRIFICING THE PROMISE

Scriptures: Genesis 22:1-14, Hebrews 9:24-28

What was God thinking?
Isaac was the key to God's promises:
To make Abraham great,
To give him many descendants,
To bless all the nations.
"Through Isaac your descendants
Will be named," God said.

Isaac was the key to God's promise:
Abraham was a hundred
Sarah was 90,
Isaac was it.
No more children in that womb,
Abraham knew.

And now God wanted
To sacrifice him,
A whole burnt offering,
With nothing left
Of Isaac or of the promise.

What was God thinking?
What was Abraham thinking
To go along with it?
I'll bet he did not tell Sarah.

What was God thinking?
Jesus was the key to God's promises:
To heal our disease,
To defeat our enemies
To lift up the lowly,
Fulfilling God's word to Abraham,
Mary said.

Jesus was the key to God's promise:
The Messiah, the Christ
The anointed king
Descended from David
Who brings God's peace on earth,
The angel said.

And now God wanted
To sacrifice him
To let him be crucified
While his enemies mocked
And his disciples mourned.

What was God thinking?
What was Jesus thinking
To go along with it?
I'll bet he did not tell Mary.

Abraham's son, his only son,
Carried the wood of the sacrifice
To an altar on Mt. Moriah,
The very mountain on which later
Solomon would build the temple,
For all the future sacrifices
Of God's people.

The other Son, God's only Son,
Carried the wood of the sacrifice
To an altar on Mt. Calvary,
Not far from Mt. Moriah,
Not far from Solomon's temple,
A hill just outside the city
In the shape of a skull.

Abraham's son, his only son,
Was bound, and lifted to an altar
Made of stones.
Abraham stretched out his hand,
Took the knife,
And raised it to slay him.

But an angel called out.
The knife stopped in mid-air.
A voice from heaven cried,
"Abraham, Abraham,
Do not hurt the boy!"

The other Son, God's only Son,
Was bound, and lifted to an altar
Made of beams.
The soldiers stretched out their hands,
Took the nails,
And pounded them into his wrists.

No angel called out;
No one stopped the pounding.
A voice from the cross cried,
"My God, my God,
Why have you forsaken me?"

As Abraham's son, his only son,
Carried the wood to Mt. Moriah,
He noticed something missing.
He asked,
"Where is the lamb for the sacrifice?"
Abraham answered,
"God will provide lamb."

And God did.
Abraham saw it caught in a thicket,
And offered it as sacrifice
Instead of his son.
The promise was fulfilled—both
Abraham's promise to Isaac,
And God's promise to Abraham.

Why did it work that way?
If God intended all along
To save Abraham's son,
Why put him at risk
In the first place?

We are told it was a test.
But of what? Abraham's faith?
Abraham shows no sign of shrinking
From God's command.
The test is whether his faith
Is justified.

As the other Son, God's only Son,
Carried the wood to Mt. Calvary,
Nothing was missing.
No one asked,

"Where is the lamb for the sacrifice?"
We knew.
"He is the lamb for the sacrifice."

In the end God saved Jesus,
Unlike Isaac,
Not by staying his execution,
But overcoming it,
Raising him to new life.
And saving the promise.

Why did it work that way?
If God intended all along
To raise Jesus from the dead,
Why let him die
In the first place?

We are told it was for us.
But how does one unjust death
Bring justice to anyone else?
The Bible tries hard to explain this:
A ransom, a substitution,
A compelling example of love,
To soften our hearts.
But these are images of a mystery
Beyond all explanation.

One thing is clear.
God does not ask of Abraham
Anything God would not also do.
If Abraham was asked to sacrifice his son,
So was God.
And if you understand the Trinity:
That Father, Son, and Spirit are one,
Then the lamb for the sacrifice
Was God Himself;
And the sacrifice,
Far from destroying the promise
Has fulfilled it.

- Ken Onstot
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