

Genesis 21:1–5; 22:1–24 – “Witness Promise’s Fulfillment”

Text: Genesis 21:1–5; 22:1–24 (CSB)

21:1–5 The LORD came to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised. Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time God had told him. Abraham named him Isaac. Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

22:1–2 After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” “Here I am,” he answered. “Take your son,” he said, “your only son Isaac, whom you love, go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.”

22:6–8 Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac. In his hand he took the fire and the knife, and the two of them walked on together. Then Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, “Father!” “Yes, my son,” he replied. “The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them walked on together.

22:11–14 But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” He replied, “Here I am.” Then he said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your only son from me.” Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in the thicket. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it as a burnt offering in place of his son. And Abraham named that place “The LORD Will Provide,” so today it is said: “On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.”

22:15–18 Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, “I swear by myself—this is the LORD’s declaration—because you have done this thing and have not withheld your only son, I will indeed bless you and make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky and the sand on the seashore... And all the nations of the earth will be blessed by your offspring because you have obeyed my command.”

Key Background

- **The Appointed Time:** “The LORD did for Sarah what he had promised” (21:1). The phrase “at the appointed time” appears in both Genesis 18:14 and 21:2. God’s fulfillment of His promise is not accidental or early or late—it arrives at exactly the time He designated. Isaac’s birth is the culmination of a twenty-five year wait (Genesis 12:4; 21:5). God’s delays are not denials; they are preparations.
- **After These Things:** The test of Genesis 22 opens with “after these things” (v. 1)—after the promise is finally fulfilled, after the joy of Isaac’s birth and growth. God’s greatest

tests often come not in our valleys but in our seasons of fullness, when we have most to lose. The test is not a surprise attack; it is a revealing of what has been forming in Abraham's heart across decades of faith.

- **The Weight of the Command:** God's instruction to Abraham is layered with specificity: "your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love" (v. 2). Each phrase adds weight. God does not speak casually about the cost. He acknowledges what He is asking. This specificity is not cruelty—it is God naming the full measure of Abraham's surrender so that Abraham can name it too.
- **Abraham's Early Morning:** Abraham rises early the next morning (v. 3)—no recorded delay, no recorded argument. Hebrews 11:17–19 explains his reasoning: Abraham believed that God could raise Isaac from the dead. His obedience was not blind resignation; it was faith reasoning from God's covenant faithfulness. If God had promised descendants through Isaac, then God would either provide an alternative or resurrect him.
- **God Will Provide:** When Isaac asks about the lamb (v. 7), Abraham answers: "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering" (v. 8). This is one of the most profound prophetic statements in the Old Testament. It is both Abraham's expression of trust in the moment and an unwitting declaration of the gospel—God providing His own Son as the sacrifice on the same mountain range (Moriah/Calvary) centuries later.
- **The Ram in the Thicket:** At the moment of deepest obedience, God intervenes (vv. 11–13). The ram caught in the thicket is not a coincidence—it is divine provision perfectly timed. God never intended for Isaac to die; He intended to reveal His own provision. The name Abraham gives the place—Yahweh Yireh, "The LORD Will Provide" (v. 14)—becomes one of God's covenant names, capturing a truth that echoes forward to the cross.
- **The Test Reveals, It Does Not Create:** God says, "Now I know that you fear God" (v. 12). This is not God learning something new—it is the test making visible what was already true. Trials do not build faith from nothing; they reveal and prove what has been forming through years of walking with God. Abraham's response on Moriah is the fruit of twenty-five years of covenant relationship.
- **The Covenant Confirmed with an Oath:** For the first time, God swears by Himself (v. 16)—"I swear by myself"—because there is no higher authority by which to swear (Hebrews 6:13–18). This oath is the highest level of divine commitment in Scripture. God ties the full force of His own being to the fulfillment of His promise to Abraham. The covenant is irrevocable.

Questions from the Story

1. What does Genesis 21:1–2 emphasize about how and when God fulfilled His promise to Sarah? What does the phrase "appointed time" communicate?
2. How does Abraham respond immediately after Isaac is born (21:3–4)? What do his actions demonstrate?
3. How does the narrator introduce the test in Genesis 22:1? What does the word "tested" tell us about the nature of what follows?
4. What is the specific command God gives Abraham in verse 2? Why does God use so many descriptive phrases for Isaac?

5. How does Abraham respond the following morning (v. 3)? What does his early rising suggest about his interior disposition?
6. How does Hebrews 11:17–19 explain Abraham’s reasoning? How does this deepen our understanding of his obedience?
7. What question does Isaac ask on the way up the mountain (v. 7)? How does Abraham’s answer reveal both his trust and his prophetic insight?
8. What does “God himself will provide” anticipate about the gospel? How does this connect to John 3:16?
9. What does God stop Abraham from doing (vv. 11–12)? What declaration does He make about Abraham’s fear of God?
10. What provision does God make (v. 13)? What is the significance of the ram being there at exactly the right moment?
11. What name does Abraham give to the place (v. 14)? What does Yahweh Yireh mean, and why is it significant?
12. How does God respond to Abraham’s obedience (vv. 15–18)? What new dimension does He add to the covenant promise?
13. Why does God swear by Himself (v. 16)? What does this communicate about the certainty of His promises (see Hebrews 6:13–18)?
14. How does the location of Mount Moriah connect to the future site of the temple in Jerusalem and, ultimately, to the cross?
15. What does this passage teach about the relationship between the fulfillment of God’s promises and the trials that follow them?
16. How does Abraham’s willingness to give up Isaac challenge us about the things in our own lives that we are reluctant to surrender to God?
17. What does “God himself will provide” teach us about how God meets us in our most costly moments of obedience?
18. How does Genesis 22 serve as one of the clearest foreshadowings of the gospel in the entire Old Testament?
19. What does God’s declaration “Now I know that you fear God” teach us about the purpose of trials in the life of faith?
20. How does the covenant oath sworn by God in verse 16 strengthen your confidence in the promises He has made to you?