

## Isaac and the Covenant Keeping God

### The big picture:

1. In the recorded history of man until genesis 12:
  - a. We see the judgement of God against Adam and Eve for their transgression of God's one command. They are banished from the garden and from the tree of life.
  - b. Judgement brought upon Cain and his descendants for the slaying of his brother Able.
  - c. Judgement of God in the global flood against the sinfulness of the world
  - d. And lastly, we see the judgement against Nimrod and the world at Babel where God divided and scattered the people into several languages and several nations.
2. The curse of Babel would be overcome by the blessing God would promise to Abraham a descendant of a pagan father named Terah.
  - a. Though God scattered the people in judgement, God makes a covenant with Abraham to gather the nations in his grace. That all the nations of the earth would be blessed. A uniting of the nations in a single people that share in the blessing of Abraham.
  - b. He called Abraham out of the Ur of the Chaldeans, and again out of Haran after the passing of his father, to leave his kindred, to leave his land, to leave the pagan worship of his father and family, and to go to land where he would show him. He called Abraham to trust him, and Abraham believed him.
  - c. God's promise to Abraham, had three major components; "I will make of thee a great nation," "unto thy seed will I give this land", and "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."
3. With the blessing of centuries separating us from this promise and the recorded history of God's people in scripture, we are able to see the Lord God of Abraham keep and fulfill his covenant he made with Abraham. We read about:
  - a. Isaac and Jacob
  - b. The twelve tribes of Israel and the elect tribe of Judah
  - c. Joseph and the Egyptian captivity
  - d. A cave tomb at the end of a field in Machpelah of Canaan that Abraham purchased to bury his beloved Sarah, and where Joseph's bones would be carried out of Egypt to be placed.
  - e. We read of Moses and God's deliverance of his people Israel
  - f. The wilderness wanderings and the crossing of the Jordan into the land of promise.
  - g. We read of King David and his son Solomon and that "he ruled over all the kings from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt" (2 Chronicles 9:26).

4. We see that God is fulfilling his promises of land and seed, but how shall all the nations of the earth be blessed? If the physical seed of Abraham was the promised seed of God then only the Jews would be blessed.
  - a. Centuries past. Centuries of division, war, defeat, captivity, and restoration.
  - b. We read of Daniel and the Hebrew children, and their faithfulness regardless of the consequence in a foreign land.
  - c. Of Esther and Nehemiah, and their bravery, vision, and selflessness.
  - d. And of the prophets pointing their finger forward to the coming of the suffering servant.
5. Until a day when a child named John was born to elderly parents Zachariah and Elizabeth. He came to be known as John the Baptist. At his birth Zachariah filled with the holy spirit “prophesied concerning the imminent coming of the messiah, saying,
  - a. Luk 1:68-79 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he swore to our father Abraham, That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.
  - b. Filled with the Holy Spirit Zachariah saw that the promise made to Abraham as he departed Haran would find its ultimate fulfilment in The Lord Jesus Christ!
6. Who are the promised seed?
  - a. John the Baptist told the multitude of Jews coming to be baptized of him,
    - i. Luke 3:8 “bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.”
  - b. Jesus shocked the Jews that followed him in his day when upon witnessing the faith of a roman centurion he said,
    - i. Mat 8:10 -12 “Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.



But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

- c. So who is the seed?
  - i. Galation 3:16: tell us that Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.
- d. And later in the same chapter:
  - i. Galatians 3:29: And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.
- e. Jesus is the physical seed of Abraham, the last representative of the believing remnant of Israel, and spiritually it is those who belong to Christ that are the children of Abraham whether they be Jews or gentiles.

7. What is the Promised Land?

- a. The physical land was Canaan and yet Canaan was a symbol and type of a spiritual land that is Christ and salvation in him. These both (the land and the seed) reach their fulfillment in Christ and their ~~consumption~~<sup>consummation</sup> in heaven where the seed, an innumerable multitude of the redeemed will be gathered around the throne of God of every kindred, people, tribe, and tongue, and we will be in the physical presence of our Savior who will wipe the tears from our eyes and he will be our God and we will be his people.

8. Now let's rewind... over 4000 years from where we are today. We have a problem. Abraham is 75 years old and has a 65 year old barren wife, physically unable to have children. The world is filled with pagan nations that worship idols and sacrifice their children to made-up deities. Without the privilege of hindsight the promise of God seemed impossible and hopeless.

**In this study of Isaac within the theme of the development of God's children, let us examine 4 major narratives presented in scripture concerning Isaac.**

**The son of promise:**

Gen 17:19 “And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.”

- 1. Abraham attempts to make God's promise work on his own terms:
  - a. Gen 15: Abraham tells God, Eliezer the steward of his home will be his heir seeing he had no children. God says no. Your own son shall be your heir. God reconfirms his promise with Abraham.
- 2. Sarah and Abraham's attempt to make God's promise work on their own terms:

- a. Gen 16: Abraham and Hagar conceive Ishmael. Gen 17: God reconfirms his promise to Abraham and says that Ishmael will not be the seed of promise but Gen 17:19 "And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him."
3. When Sarah was 90 and Abraham was 100, 25 years after God had first promised to make a great nation of him, Sarah conceived and bore a son and they named him Isaac (Gen 21).
  - a. His name meant laughter, or to laugh, referring to both the laugh of disbelief that Sarah had expressed when the Lord said she would bear a son, as well as the laugh of joy Abraham and Sarah experienced in seeing and experiencing the fulfilment of God's promise in their son. The child of promise had come.

### **The Sacrifice:**

Gen 22:2 Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

1. In one of the most shocking and dramatic scenes of all scripture we are told of God's call to Abraham to sacrifice his only son Isaac.
  - a. Abraham wakes early and takes his donkey, his servants, and his son Isaac. He cut wood and they began their journey to the place which God had told him.
  - b. After a three day journey they approach the destination and Abraham tells his servants to stay put with the donkey; "I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you."
    - i. Heb 11:17-19 "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead..."
  - c. Abraham laid the wood for the offering on Isaac his son and they went together to make the sacrifice.
  - d. Isaac speaks for the first time in the narrative at this point. "My father... Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham responds, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering."
  - e. Abraham built the altar and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son on the altar. He then stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son.
  - f. The Lord then intervened in the way of an angel who told Abraham to stop. And declared Abraham's faith and reverence to God in not withholding his son. At that point Abraham looks up and sees a ram caught in a thicket, and he took the ram and offered it in place of his son.



### **The prepared bride:**

Gen 24:4 But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.

1. In Gen 24 we read the beautiful story of the union of Isaac and Rebekah.
  - a. Abraham in his old age was clearly concerned with helping Isaac find a bride. God's covenant promises he made to Abraham were conferred to Isaac and his seed. At this point Isaac is a 40 year old bachelor and Abraham is going to get the ball rolling.
  - b. He commissions his faithful servant (Eliezer probably) to go on a mission for him in pursuit of a bride for his son.
    - i. First, the wife had to come from his country and his people,
    - ii. Second he could not take Isaac there; he had to bring her back. For he was to remain in the land of promise.
  - c. The servant made an oath to Abraham that he would do what he was asked.
  - d. He went to Nahor in Mesopotamia and he and his camels set up shop near the well of water where the women would go to draw water.
    - i. And there he prayed. He prayed for the Lord to grant him success and asked the Lord to show him a woman that would allow him to drink from her jar and who would also give her camels water to drink.
    - ii. We are told that before he was done praying Rebekah came to the well with her water Jar.
    - iii. We are told that she was of the people of Abraham, that she was very attractive, that she was a virgin, she offered drink to Abraham's servant and then began to draw water for his camels. She was truly ordained by God.
    - iv. The servant praises God for his steadfast love and faithfulness. Giving him the glory for this encounter.
    - v. After conversation and a night at her brother Laban's house, it was agreed that Rebekah would come back and marry Isaac, and in a beautiful scene where Isaac is meditating out in the field Rebekah rides up on a camel. She inquires who the man is and upon knowing it was her betrothed she veils herself and humbly submits herself to Isaac who takes her as his wife.

### **The Birth of Jacob and Esau and the Deception of Isaac.**

Gen 28:3,4 And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people; and give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham.

1. In Gen 25 we find out that Rebekah is also barren and we find Isaac praying to God for his wife. Again the impossible with man stands in the way of God's promise.
  - a. Shortly thereafter God again miraculously makes the impossible possible and Rebekah conceived.
  - b. It would prove to be difficult pregnancy and during the trials of the struggling children inside her womb, God comes with these prophetic words,
    - i. "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger."
  - c. She then gave birth to twin boys, the first came out red and covered in hair and was called Esau and the second came out with his hand holding the heel of his brother and so they called his name Jacob.
  - d. The short portion of record history of their life was not a pretty picture. Isaac loved Esau because he was a skillful hunter and a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man dwelling in tents. Rebekah loved Jacob. Parental favoritism at its worst.
  - e. The internal family struggles were ugly. Jacob gets Esau to sell him his birthright while Esau despised his birthright and sold it for a meal.
  - f. As Isaac grew old and his sight began to fail him. He chose in direct disobedience to the revealed will of God that he would give his blessing to Esau his first born. In an ugly deception Rebekah and Jacob fool Isaac into thinking Jacob was Esau and thus granting his blessing to Jacob and not Esau as he intended.
  - g. It was an event that separated the family, with Jacob having to flee to Laban's house to escape the wrath of his brother.

**6 takeaways about the development of God's children and what can be learned from the narrative of Isaac's life.**

**Thesis Statement:** The spiritual development of Isaac and the spiritual development of God's children is directly correlated to a deepening understanding of the nature and purposes of God.

**1. God is the creator and sustainer of all life**

- a. Isaac had no explainable, natural way to be conceived. He owed his life and the life of his children to the Lord. I imagine some of his first memories would have been the account of his miraculous conception and birth. He by the example of his father knew that life is the Lords to take and to give, and that every breath and every day was given and held by the Lord.
- b. As we mature in the Lord and raise our children it is vital that they know that they are not merely a collection of molecules held in suspension. Having come to be formed after



billions of years and unfathomable chance, but they were made and formed by God and all that we see in the heavens and the earth is the creative power and handiwork of Christ.

- c. Ps 139:13 "For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

**2. God creates us with value and purpose. Desiring to carry out his divine, redemptive purposes through us.**

- a. Isaac like all of us were created in the image of God. With a purpose to glorify God and to be used as an instrument or vessel for God's redemptive purposes to be carried out and displayed.
- b. Isaac was the child of promise and certainly was told from a young age by his parents until God himself confirmed it to him
  - i. Gen 26:2-4 "And the LORD appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father. I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed."
- c. Isaac knew and every child of God should know that we are part of a bigger plan. That God is working out his divine, redemptive purposes to redeem a fallen people from sin, and to present a people of his very own to his Son Jesus Christ, and that even though he doesn't need us, he chooses to use us as instruments and vessels to accomplish his purposes.

**3. God will/has prepared and provided a sacrifice for sin in our stead.**

- a. In one of the clearest pictures in the Old Testament, of God's future sacrifice of his son Jesus Christ on the cross, Isaac trusted God and obediently submitted to his own sacrifice only to have God prepare and provide a sacrifice to take his place.
- b. In the account of God calling Abraham to sacrifice his only son and son of promise, we see for the first time in the bible where the word love is used. In the context of Abraham's (The father's) deep love for his son.
- c. Isaac in his teens or 20's was obedient to his elderly father. He carried the wood for the sacrifice to the mount of the Lord.
- d. When asked where the lamb was for the sacrifice Abraham replied, "The Lord himself will provide a sacrifice."
- e. We do not see Isaac strive or fight against his binding but obedient to his father, submit himself to the sacrifice, only to be spared by the Lord. The Lord had provided a substitutionary sacrifice in place of Isaac.

- f. The hinge of all of human history, the hinge of all of redemptive history falls squarely on a hill <sup>Not Fear</sup> ~~just a short walk~~ from where Isaac was to be offered when Jesus Christ carried his cross only to collapse in weakness and was led to the mount of the Lord where he could have at any time called 12 legions of angels to come and remove him, but in obedience to his heavenly Father, with complete commitment to the Father's redemptive plan, he willingly gave his life as a substitutionary sacrifice for us.
- g. As this event must have had a most significant impact on the mind and life of Isaac, so to must the atoning sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ as a lamb slain before the foundation of the world have on us. It must be the central event that shapes our mind, heart, and life in relationship to God, to saints, and to sinners alike. It must be the driving force of our lives and purpose.
  - i. Galatians 3:13,14; Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.
  - ii. Cor 1:18: For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

#### **4. God keeps his covenants.**

- a. God was faithful to his promise that he made to his father Abraham and continued to carry out that out through Isaac.
- b. Barren wives, violent foes, broken promises, lapses of faith, and selfish motivations and yet none of it could thwart the purposes and promise of God.
  - i. Isa 14:27: For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? And his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?
- c. God is a covenant keeping God what he says, stands, and he cannot lie.
- d. What is impossible to man is possible with God.
- e. In coming to an understanding of the faithfulness of God, our trust for him grows deeper and we grow in spiritual maturity. This understanding was developed in Isaac and also in us through God's word, through prayer, and especially through experience.

#### **5. God prepares and uses others in our lives to reveal his nature and purposes to us.**

- a. Fathers (Abraham): No other earthly figure in Isaac's life had a greater impact on his spiritual development then his father.
  - i. Much of the narrative of Isaac's life recorded in scripture seems like a repeat of the events of Abraham. Both his acts of faith and his acts of disobedience.
  - ii. The role of father has been established by God and is in its best form is an avenue to teach children the nature and characteristics of God and to mirror the relationship that God created us to enjoy with him. At worst, it can break children



and scar their idea of God and of the idea of what a relationship with him should be.

- iii. As fathers we must understand this most vital role we have and mirror the person of Jesus Christ in our self-sacrificial love, righteousness, and faithful obedience to our heavenly father amongst others.
- iv. Abraham's faithfulness and trust of God carried out in the sacrifice of his son Isaac would have left a lasting impression. He trusted the promise of God and knew that he would not fail in his covenant promise. He knew God has power of life.
- v. Abraham also impacted Isaac's development in being integral in securing a wife for him. With God's purposes and revealed will at the forefront of his heart he made sure that Isaac's wife would be of his own people; a demand not about race but about her faith in the one true God of Israel. He demanded that his servant not take Isaac out of Canaan knowing he could be tempted to remain and leave the land of promise.
- vi. God has not called fathers to take passive roles in the spiritual development of our children but to guard them and guide into the path of God's will.

1. "Parents in disposing of their children, should carefully consult the welfare of their souls, and their furtherance in the way to heaven. Those who through grace have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust, and have brought up their children accordingly, should take heed of doing anything by which they may be again entangled therein and overcome. Beware that you bring them not thither again" (Matthew Henry)

b. Spouses (Rebekah): God prepared a bride for Isaac.

- i. In the beautiful narrative in Gen 24 we first meet Rebekah at the end of the prayer of Abraham's servant for success in locating a wife of Isaac. Before he even finishes praying here comes Rebekah; we are told she was of the right people, again a reference to her Faith more so than her race. That she was very attractive, that she was a virgin, she was kind, hospitable, and clearly hard working as she rushed back and forth providing water for the servant and his herd of camels. We see that she was modest, humble, and submissive. Most importantly of all, she was God ordained.
- ii. The impact of a spouse on the spiritual development of a child of God is no small matter, and can severely hinder or incredibly help the spiritual development of God's children. God's guidance and revealed will should guide our choice of a spouse and we must not be blinded by our own lust and desires.
- iii. In no way was Rebekah justified in her deception of Isaac near the end of his life, and she will stand accountable for her actions, yet still she was instrumental in

the blessing of Jacob, the second born. God's will and purposes were carried out, despite the errant choices of all involved.

6. **God is patient and merciful towards his children, and remains faithful to us despite our failings.**

a. In Isaac I see a man who...

- Prayed
- Obeyed and loved his parents
- Was faithful in believing the unseen promises of God and passing them on to his sons.
- Talked with God.
- Experienced unimaginable trials of faith
- Succeeded and failed
- Was not always the best parent or husband
- Had lapses of faith and judgement
- Could be selfish and put his own priorities before God's
- Was a child of promise, a child of the kingdom
- An imperfect vessel being used by God to carry out his purposes.

b. When I see Isaac I often see me and I am made to worship the everlasting mercy and faithfulness of God.

**Conclusion:**

1. Without the privilege of hindsight of the post resurrection world, and without the privilege of the canon of scripture, Isaac's spiritual development rested on God revealing himself through experience, through the lives and faithfulness of others, and by direct revelation. He was an imperfect man, loved deeply by God, and called to a higher purpose. His, as well as our spiritual development, is directly correlated to a deepening understanding of God's character and purposes. As we dive deeper into the beauty and awesomeness of God we develop an awe and reverence that is the beginning of wisdom, as we look to the cross and the sacrifice of Christ our hearts are made humble and our praise becomes pure and unavoidable, as we look at the lost world in light of all God has done throughout human history in the person of his Son Jesus Christ to redeem us, we lose our disdain and it's replaced with compassion and mercy, and when we see the perfected kingdom in the glory of heaven to come, we anticipate and hasten the day when all wrong will be made right and we will gather with the great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou has created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

Amen.