

**Episode:** Genesis & Job Series No. 08

**Narrator:** Isaac

**Primary Scriptures:** Genesis 21-23

**Story Summary:** Birth of Isaac; Ishmael sent away; Isaac becomes a sacrifice

**Location:** Canaan

**Time:** Abraham's birth is probably 2200 – 2000 BC

**Suggested Memory Scriptures:** Genesis 21:13; 22:2, 22:5, 22:12, 22:16-18

Abraham is 100 years old. It has been twenty-five years since God first promised him an offspring,<sup>1</sup> but he and Sarah have borne no children. Something has to give.

It does. The Lord is gracious, and Sarah becomes pregnant. At 100 years of age, Abraham becomes the father of Isaac. When Isaac is weaned, Abraham throws a great feast. This provides an occasion for Ishmael to mock Isaac, which infuriates Sarah. She insists that Abraham send Ishmael and his mother away. This is crushing to Abraham because Ishmael is also Abraham's son, but only through Sarah's handmaiden. God tells Abraham to send Ishmael away, and God will not only make sure he survives, but also become the start of a great nation.

Genesis 22 is one of the most crucial chapters in the Bible. It tells the story of God testing Abraham by commanding him to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, to God. Abraham obeys God, takes Isaac to Mount Moriah, places him on an altar. As he brings the knife to Isaac, his hand is stayed by an angel, and Isaac is saved. They spot a ram caught in a nearby thicket and sacrifice it instead.

That story raises a long list of questions. Did God really want Abraham to make a human sacrifice? How could Abraham have enough faith to sacrifice Isaac, when it was the son through whom God was going to fulfill so many promises? How could Isaac have enough faith in his father to willingly lay on the altar? How much does this story foreshadow the story of Jesus' death on the cross?

Perhaps the answers to many questions about that story can be addressed by looking at a New Testament scripture, Hebrews 11:19: "Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from the dead."<sup>2</sup> Absolutely astounding. Abraham had so much faith in God that he *reasoned* God could raise somebody from the dead. Never been done before, but that was the only way God could fulfill his promises to Abraham. Raising a son from the dead? Yes, just as God will do with his own son.

<sup>1</sup> Genesis 12:1-4

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 11:19 NIV

### Discussion Questions:

1. Genesis 21:1-2 points out in detail that Isaac was born exactly according to God's promises. What lessons do you think Abraham learned from that?
2. Compare Genesis 17:12 and 21:4. Why do you think God chose the eighth day instead of a different day, or no special requirement at all?
3. Read Genesis 21:13. Do you think Ishmael was in God's plan, or was God making the best of the situation? Name some of Ishmael's descendants.
4. Genesis 21:34 says Abraham stayed in the land of Philistines for a long time. Is that historically possible?
5. Many people think that Abraham only had two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. Can you name his other sons? (Genesis 22:20-24)
6. Abraham purchased the Cave of Machpelah, near Mamre. Who else was buried there? Who was the first person in the Bible known to be buried?

3. The slave traders who purchased Joseph from his brothers, and the enemies of Gideon. It may be that Midianites are also Ishmaelites. Traditionally, many have associated some or all Arabs with Ishmael. 4. Nobody knows where the Philistines came from or when they arrived in the area of Canaan. It is possible that the writer of Genesis used a well-known name from his own time period to designate an area and people. 6. Sarah is the first person named in the Bible as being buried. Others known to be buried in the cave are Abraham, Isaac, Rebecca, and Jacob.

### Application Questions:

1. Genesis 22:1 says God tested Abraham. What would it look like for God to test you? How would you know the test was from God?
2. Read Genesis 22:5. Do you infer that Abraham knew he would be returning with Isaac, or just that he was hoping to do so? Read Hebrews 11:19 and answer the question again. Abraham had so much faith in God that he could reason differently than normal people. Does your faith inform your reason, or does your reason inform your faith?

### Application Questions for Teens:

1. Many people think Abraham had an innate faith in God. Read Romans 4:21. What was one source of Abraham's faith in God? What does it mean to be fully persuaded?
2. Read Genesis 22:5. Does this foreshadow God's sacrifice of Jesus? Why or why not? Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born. Can you think of a time when you had to be very patient while waiting on something you wanted badly? Were you patient because somebody you trusted had promised you something?