

CHRIST: The LORD Will Provide [Romans 8.32]

Read Genesis, chapters 20-23 & Romans 8.32

### ‘CHRIST IN GENESIS’: MAKING THE CONNECTIONS & SETTING THE CONTEXT

1/ With these four chapters, we will close out the Abraham-exclusive portion of the ‘Abraham narratives’ in the Book of Genesis that began in **ch 12**. Reason being, Isaac will be born in **ch 21**, and from there, Isaac will become the focus of much of the narrative going forward. Isaac now inherits the covenant promises Yahweh has made and delivered to Abraham. Isaac will carry them forward until his son, Jacob, becomes the ‘carrier’ of the covenant in the *historical-redemptive progression* of The Story of CHRIST.

2/ This is another lengthy [and rich and full] section of Scripture we’re going to deal with in this lesson. But as I have told you before, we have a certain number of weeks allotted for this survey/summary/scan course through Genesis. And rather than play ‘hop-scotch’ through the Book and deal with the many highlights, we have chosen to at least summarize the whole book in ‘chunks’ to keep it connected in the text and in our ways of thinking – maintain a continuum of theme developments and our train of thought. We want to see how the whole panoramic narrative flows as it tells the Story of CHRIST IN GENESIS. So we’ll do the same with this lesson. We’ll connect all the contiguous ‘shorter stories’ as they all fit together in the larger story of the Book – and especially as they sow the seeds and start the threads that will lead to the coming of CHRIST into our world ... and then on to the ultimate fulfillment of the Covenant purposes of God for the world in the New Creation – and all [IN CHRIST!](#)

3/ Our lesson title “**The LORD will provide**” is found in **ch 22.8-14** and the CHRIST-markers are revealed in **Romans 8.32**. We’ll get to that here shortly. The LORD not only provided the substitute sacrifice for Isaac on Mount Moriah, but we can also see in all the contextual stories around that pivotal story how Yahweh provided what was needed to keep His covenant with Abraham in every event before it and after it as well. Indeed, the whole Old Testament narrative is the sweeping panoramic Providential narrative of how The LORD provided the ‘**seed of the woman**’ Redeemer first promised in the **Genesis 3.15** ‘First Gospel/Protoevangelium’: “**God will provide for Himself the Lamb for a burnt offering.**”

#### I / Genesis 20.1-14 | Abraham & Abimelech, Act I: The ‘son of promise’ is threatened

1/ This is another recurring theme throughout Genesis: Yahweh has given His promise of the covenant son to be born to Abraham and Sarah ... who will serve to fulfill the ‘**seed of the woman**’ **promise of the Redeemer that God will provide** [see **Genesis 3.15**]. We have just seen in **ch 17.21 & 18.10** that Yahweh had promised “**about this time next year,...Sarah your wife shall have a son.**” It had to be just a short time after that announcement of Isaac’s impending birth that Abraham once again sojourned in the portion of the Promised Land occupied by the Philistines [see **ch 21.34**]. Their king’s name was Abimelech.

2/ We have to make these longer stories short: but Abraham once again lied about Sarah being his wife, saying instead she was his ‘sister’ [see his equivocation in **vv 10-13**]. He did this out of fear for his life **v 11** – that they would see Sarah’s beauty and want her to be their wife and maybe kill Abraham to ‘get him out of the way.’ Here again [**as in ch 12.10-20**], Abraham knew ‘he couldn’t die’ if the promise was going to be fulfilled – but he was not fully trusting God to keep him alive. So, he thought he must ‘save his own life’ for the sake of the fulfillment of the covenant promise. He should have trusted God, but he didn’t. *Of course, the ‘threat’ to the covenant ‘son of promise’ was that he put Sarah into the jeopardous position of becoming the wife of a foreigner and the father of her baby!* God wouldn’t allow Abraham’s caving in of faith in Yahweh to threaten His covenant promise and purposes. So, God appeared in a dream to Abimelech, threatened his own life if he touched Sarah, and instructed Abimelech to give her back to Abraham. He did and scolded Abraham for lying to him and putting him and his people in such jeopardy.

3/ “**The LORD will provide**” here also. God provided for Abraham’s deliverance from this grievous threat to His covenant ‘son of promise.’ God said to Abimelech: “**...and it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her**” [**ch 20.6**]. Then, Abraham prayed to Yahweh

for Abimelech's healing – and also to open the wombs of Abimelech's wives so they could bear children again. *God is the Giver of all birth and life, even to Philistines.*

## II / Genesis 21.1-7 | The birth of Isaac: The promise is 'delivered'!

1/ So now, finally, in God's time, and in God's way – the 'son of promise' is born! After all the years of waiting ... after all the repeated affirmations and confirmations of the covenant promise that Abraham and Sarah would give birth to Yahweh's covenant 'son of promise,' Isaac is born! **"The LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and The LORD did to Sarah as He had promised. And Sarah conceived and born Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him. Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac."** **"Abraham was 100 years old when his son Isaac was born to him."** [See again the testimonies to God's power and faithfulness to His promises ... and also Abraham's and Sarah's faith ... in **Romans 4.16-25** and **Hebrews 11.8-12.**]

2/ The often-repeated theme of '**laughter**' comes up again. Isaac's very name is a form of the same word. This time, however, the laughter is not in doubt, unbelief, or incredulity [as both Abraham and Sarah both had laughed previously], but rather the laughter of ecstatic joy and praise to God for His mercies and faithfulness. And, just like Isaac is a historical 'forerunner' of his much-later 'son of promise,' CHRIST, so also there was much laughter and joy of rejoicing when CHRIST's immediate forerunner was born [**Luke 1.57-58**]. The covenant of promised redemption in CHRIST is a covenant of joy! [**Psalm 126.1-3**].

## III / Genesis 21.8-20 | Hagar & Ishmael: The 'son of promise' is threatened again

1/ The gist of this passage is that when Isaac grew and was weaned, Abraham's son by Hagar, Ishmael, became a threat again to Isaac's being recognized as the sole heir of the covenant promise. Except this time, it's inside the family. We have already learned that Abraham was 86 years old when Ishmael was born [**ch 16.16**]. So, Ishmael is now 14+ years old [+ whatever age Isaac was 'weaned'] – a teenager. He's old enough to be 'feeling his own oats' as the already-born son of Abraham by Hagar. In some way, he was acting inappropriately toward Isaac by '**laughing**' at him [v 9]. We're not told whether it was mocking the younger Isaac, taunting, trying to 'pull rank on him,' or bullying him in some way. But whatever he was doing, Sarah perceived that he was trying in some way to set himself up as a rival and competitor to Isaac as the son of promise. So, Hagar and Ishmael had to go. Abraham was grieved. Ishmael was his son, too. But God agreed with Sarah and told Abraham the separation had to be made: **"Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named"** [v 12].

2/ Paul picks up this story in **Galatians 4.21-31** and says there that Ishmael was '**persecuting**' '**him who was born according to the Spirit**' – and that the same 'persecution' is still going on now against the people of faith by those who are religious 'in their own right.'

3/ However, Yahweh promised also to protect the hapless Hagar and the defenseless Ishmael. He will protect and provide for them and make a nation of him as well. Yahweh appeared to Hagan and Ishmael as they '**wandered in the wilderness**' and would have died if Yahweh had not intervened and provided water, sustenance, and protection for them. In fact, three different times, the narrator references '**in the wilderness**' to show how Yahweh can provide and take care of those whom He will under the direst of circumstances and stresses. Israel surely would have taken comfort, solace, and encouragement from this Divine protection and provision during their own '**wilderness**' journeys and experiences in later years.

## IV / Genesis 21.22-34 | Abraham & Abimelech, Act II: peace treaty with their neighbors

1/ Once again, we come back to the Philistine king, Abimelech. This, too, is part of the covenant 'blessing' narrative. Abimelech had an encounter with Abraham's God back in ch 20. Abimelech had witnessed how Abraham's God was with him and how Abraham had access to his God. God had blessed Abraham: **"At that time Abimelech and Phicol the commander of his army said to Abraham, 'God is with you in all that you do. Now therefore swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me or with my descendants or with my posterity [as Abraham had done during their previous encounter], but**

as I have dealt kindly with you, so you will deal with me and with the land where you have sojourned'. And Abraham said, 'I will swear.'"

2/ However, there was a matter of encroachment by Abimelech's servants against Abraham that Abraham wanted to settle before making a neighborly covenant of peace: some of Abimelech's servants had seized and stolen a well from Abraham [v 25-26]. As in their previous encounter, Abimelech was ignorant of any such egregious transgression against his God-blessed neighbor. So, Abimelech promised to make that matter right. Abraham then agreed to establish a covenant of peace with Abimelech that neither of them would transgress the other. So, Abraham gave lavish gifts to Abimelech just as Abimelech had given to Abraham previously. [And, we, too are reminded to "**strive for peace with everyone**" (Hebrews 12.14)].

3/ Further, Abraham set 'seven' ewe lambs apart and gave them to Abimelech. We need to note here that the Hebrew word for 'seven' [*sheba*] sounds like the word for 'swear or oath' [*shaba*]. So the significance of the 'seven' lambs would coincide with the 'swear/oath' they were exchanging. Both words are repeated and woven throughout the narrative, three times each. The word 'seven' is used four times if you count its use in the name of the place where the covenant was made, 'Beersheba,' meaning 'well of the oath' or 'well of the seven.' Both words would remind these two covenanters of the same mutual covenant.

4/ Beersheba then became Abraham's address and place of residence [ch 22.19]. This same Beersheba will come up again later on in the Isaac part of the narrative. And, once again, we are reminded in the last verse that Abraham "sojourned many days in the land of the Philistines," reminding us again that Abraham still has no 'homeplace' to call his own in this Promised Land inheritance that God had covenanted to give him. [See Hebrews 11.13.]

#### V / Genesis 22.1-23 | Abraham offers up Isaac: The LORD provided the sacrificial Lamb

1/ This is, of course, one of the most defining stories of the entire Abraham narratives, and one also that is most commented on by the inspired New Testament interpreters. Just to give you a heads-up, you will find this 'test' interpreted in Hebrews 11.17-19 and James 2.18-24. It is also alluded to in Romans 8.31-32, and we are using that Pauline phrase "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?" God has covenanted to be 'for us' IN CHRIST from eternity!

2/ So, even before we get into a brief summary of Genesis 22, let's look at these specific New Testament words so we can refer back to them:

- Hebrews 11.17-19: By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son,<sup>18</sup> of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named."<sup>19</sup> He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.
- James 2.18-24: But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.<sup>19</sup> You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!<sup>20</sup> Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?<sup>21</sup> Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?<sup>22</sup> You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works;<sup>23</sup> and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God.<sup>24</sup> You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. [see below...]

3/ So here in ch 22, we are told that "After these things God tested Abraham..." What God was 'testing' was not first and primarily Abraham's 'love,' whether Abraham was willing to love God more than Isaac, whom he truly and deeply loved [v 2] – but what Yahweh was 'testing' was Abraham's faith and obedience: whether Abraham believed and trusted Him enough to obey and do what He commanded him to do. What Yahweh was commanding Abraham to do was to offer Isaac as a sacrifice to God – even after God had finally given Isaac to him in fulfillment of the long-awaited for promise. Isaac was the necessary 'link' in all the promises – both then and future – that God had promised and fulfilled ... and Abraham had believed.

***If God commands that he kill Isaac, then the covenant is dead and all the promises to be fulfilled through Isaac come to an end!*** But Abraham passed the test of obedience. He proceeded immediately to carry it out, as painful as it was. He prepared all the necessary instruments and supplies and took all the necessary steps to obey God's instructions. And he did all this as an expression of 'worship' [v 5].

4/ However, Abraham's total, committed, and unreserved faith in Yahweh made him believe and trust that, even if God required him to carry out the sacrificial deed to its fatal end, *God was able and would have to even raise him from the dead [Hebrews 11.19]* because God would be faithful to His promise!

5/ This is how "**Abraham our father [was] justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar ... and faith was completed by his works [James 2.21-22]**". Abraham was not 'justified' by this act of his works in the sense of being 'saved / justified' from the guilt of his sins; but his 'works' of obedient faith 'justified' his confession of faith in God – that is, evidenced, vindicated, proved, demonstrated, showed it to be true faith – by his obedience to what God had commanded him to do.

6/ But the true CHRIST-marker is seen in the substitute sacrifice God provided. When God saw that Abraham believed and trusted Him to the point he would obey God even to the point of offering back to Him the 'son of promise' [v 12], God provided the '**lamb for a burnt offering**' in the '**ram, caught in the thicket by his horns,**' God was pointing to CHRIST whom '*He would not spare, but deliver Him up for us all*' [Romans 8.32]. The promise that '**and in you all the nations of the earth will be blessed**' would be carried on into the future history by Isaac, whom God spared; but it would ultimately be fulfilled in CHRIST, whom God did not spare. And, in CHRIST, God has provided and will give '**all things**'!

7/ Just to add one additional CHRIST-marker to this episode: when Yahweh told Abraham to go specifically "**to the land of Moriah**" [v 2], He knew that, in time, THAT would be the very location where His Temple would be built and where He would direct the OT sacrifices and offerings to be made to Him: "**Then Solomon began to build the house of The LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where The LORD had appeared to David his father, at the place that David had appointed, on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite**" [2 Chronicles 3.1]. [See the background story in 1 Chronicles 21].

8/ So, the offering of Isaac [in the substitute ram] would 'pre-enact' CHRIST as "**God will provide for Himself the Lamb for a burnt offering, my son.**" And later, in time, on that very site, God will Providentially provide the Temple where ALL the sacrificial offerings would 'pre-enact' CHRIST ... until CHRIST Himself comes as "**The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world [John 1.29].**"

9/ On a literary note here: with this concluding episode of the Abrahamic narratives, the author [Moses] provides 'bookends' [or what we call an 'inclusio'] by writing **ch 22.1-3** in much the same way as he began the Abraham story in **ch 12.1-4a**. **Chapter 24** will pick up with Isaac becoming the main character in the following narratives until the Genesis narrative is finally handed over to Jacob, then to Joseph.

## **VI / Genesis 23.1-20 | Sarah is buried in Canaan: The LORD provided their only 'possession'**

1/ I just want to point out a couple significant CHRIST-markers here as they relate to the fulfillment of God's promises and the continuation of the Covenant. The subject of this chapter is that Sarah died ['dead/died' is used ten times]. And she is buried ['bury' is used eleven times]. But God had kept every word of every promise He had made to Abraham and Sarah while she lived. We have chronicled those.

2/ But, with Sarah's burial in this plot of land in Machpelah purchased from the Hittites, we need to note that this was the ONLY real estate portion of the Promised Land that Abraham ever owned. The promise would be fully fulfilled in Abraham's coming descendants ... Abraham had to believe that, too!

3/ ALSO, Sarah "**died in the faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth**" [read the more complete New Testament interpretation and commentary on Abraham's and Sarah's faith in Hebrews 11.8-16]. She died believing that EVERYTHING God had promised, He would give them in His due time ... as He did for them, as He has done IN CHRIST, and as He will continue to do for us.

**"They desire a better country, that is, a Heavenly one" [Hebrews 11.16]**