

The Binding of Isaac

WHAT WE FOUND

- The reader is told from verse 1 what Abraham never hears: it is a test. God's settled intention was never Isaac's death; Abraham walks three days without that sentence, and we never read a line without it.
- "Go" (Hebrew *lekh lekha*) occurs only twice in the Bible: 12:1 took Abraham's past; 22:2 asks his future: "your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love": the Bible's first use of the word love, a father's for his son.
- Abraham's own words give away his mind: "we will come again" and "God will provide himself the lamb." Hebrews 11:17-19 confirms it: he reasoned that God could raise the dead, because God had sworn the future ran through Isaac (Heb 11:18) and God cannot lie (Heb 6:18). Not blind obedience: trust doing arithmetic with promises.
- Isaac carries the wood; father and son walk "both of them together"; the knife is stayed; a ram is provided "instead of." Moriah is the Temple Mount (2 Chronicles 3:1), and the place-name is future tense: "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided." The ram was a down payment.
- The vocabulary migrates to the Gospel's center: "you have not withheld your son, your only son" becomes "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all" (Romans 8:32). The Father who stopped Abraham's hand did not stop His own. "Where is the lamb?" is answered at the Jordan: "Behold, the Lamb of God."

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Irenaeus of Lyons · *Against Heresies, Book IV*

In willingly offering his beloved son, Abraham was let into the mystery of the Father's own gift: his obedience prefigures from the human side what God would accomplish in delivering up His only-begotten for us.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine · *The City of God, Book XVI*

Isaac carrying the wood signifies Christ carrying His own cross, and the ram in the thicket points to the true victim God provided: prophecy in the form of history.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH

St. John of the Cross · *The Ascent of Mount Carmel; The Dark Night*

God purifies mature faith by nights in which every felt certainty is withdrawn and the soul walks by God's bare word alone: the night is faith being weaned from everything that is not God.

Applying his teaching, this study reads Abraham's three silent days on the road to Moriah as just such a night.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- Name your Isaac aloud to God: the good gift most gripped; open your hands while you say it, and pray Abraham's arithmetic: You have promised; You cannot lie. (Surrender hands over the grip, never your duties or anyone's safety.)
- Read Hebrews 11:8–19 alongside your own story; notice where your trust matches his and where it snags.
- At “Behold the Lamb of God” this Sunday, hear Isaac's question answered.
- Read Genesis 24–28: note every well and every deception.

MEMORY VERSE

“God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” (Genesis 22:8)

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read Genesis 24–28 before next session.

Catechism references: CCC 53, 145–146, 706, 1819, 2572.