

SESSION 5

The Lord Will Provide

The Covenant Formula, Circumcision, and the Mountain of the Aqedah

TAKE-HOME SHEET

WHAT WE FOUND

Tonight the sentence arrived. Twenty-four years after the call, God spoke the vow this whole study is named for: "to be God to you and to your descendants after you... an everlasting covenant" (Genesis 17:7). That is the covenant formula, and you now know it by ear. Watch for it; wherever it sounds, you are standing at a covenant. With it came new names, Abraham the father of a multitude and Sarah the princess from whom kings will come, and a sign cut into the flesh: circumcision, marking the truth that God's future comes as gift, not human potency, and given to eight-day-old male infants, because belonging to God's family was never something you earn first.

Then Moriah. The details we gathered are worth keeping in exact order: a father commanded to offer "your son, your only son... whom you love" (the Bible's first use of the word love); a son old enough to carry the wood of his own sacrifice up the mountain, whose unresisting obedience the tradition has honored as willing self offering; a father's answer that has never stopped echoing, "God will provide himself the lamb"; a ram in the thicket instead; and a place name in the future tense, "on the mount of the LORD it shall be provided," as if the mountain were still waiting. 2 Chronicles 3:1 tells us where Moriah is: the temple mount, Jerusalem. The vacancy on that hill stays open for now.

We also took the faith and works question at full strength. Genesis 15:6 says Abraham's faith was reckoned as righteousness under the stars; James 2 says that scripture was "fulfilled" decades later on Moriah, and that faith without works is dead. The two are not enemies: justification begins as sheer unmerited gift (the Church teaches this as plainly as anyone), and the faith that receives it is a living seed that must flower into obedience, "faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6). And God ended the day with an oath sworn on himself: in your seed, all nations blessed. Romans 8:32 turns the whole scene around: the Father "did not spare his own Son." What Abraham was asked for one morning, God asked of himself in full.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Augustine *City of God, Book 16, Chapter 32*

St. Augustine read the Aqedah with the Church's eyes: Isaac carrying the wood to the place of sacrifice is a figure of Christ carrying his own cross, and the ram caught by its horns in the thicket signifies the sacrifice that God himself provides. For Augustine, Abraham never doubted God's promise; he reasoned that the God who gave Isaac from a dead womb could give him back from a dead body.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom *Homilies on Genesis*

St. John Chrysostom dwelt on the three day journey to Moriah: God did not ask for a moment's impulse but for seventy-two hours of walking beside the son he was commanded to surrender. The test, Chrysostom taught, was aimed not at informing God, who knows all hearts, but at revealing Abraham's faith to Abraham and to every generation after him, so that the father of believers would have children who knew what their father was made

of.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ephrem the Syrian *Commentary on Genesis*

St. Ephrem, the great deacon poet of the Syriac church and a Doctor of the Church, saw mercy hidden inside the test: God, who never desired the death of the boy, desired the revelation of the father's love, and provided the ram so that Isaac would go free. In Ephrem's reading, the mountain teaches that God asks for everything precisely in order to give back more than he asked.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- Once this week, pray Genesis 17:7 back to God in the first person: "You are my God, and the God of my children after me." If you have children or godchildren, pray it over them by name.
- Identify one "Isaac," something good that has quietly become ultimate, and hand it to God explicitly in prayer this week. Not because he will always ask for it, but because he must be free to.
- Before next session, read Exodus 3:1 to 15, Exodus 12:1 to 14, and Exodus 24:1 to 11. Watch for a family word God uses for Israel, and watch what is done with blood.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son."

Genesis 22:8 (RSV2CE)

Before Next Session: Read Exodus 3:1 to 15, Exodus 12:1 to 14, and Exodus 24:1 to 11. Watch for a family word God uses for Israel, and watch carefully what is done with blood.

Catechism References: CCC 145 to 146, 706, 1150, 2572