

GENESIS
Chapter 22:2-14

Technical Notes of Matthew Poole

(2) And he said, 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.

Not a word here but might pierce a heart of stone, much more so tender a father as Abraham was. *Take now*, without demurring or delay, I allow thee no time for consideration, *thy own proper son*; not a beast, not an enemy, not a stranger, though that had been very difficult to one so kind to all strangers; not a dear servant, not a friend or familiar; *thine only son*, not by birth, for so he had another, Ishmael; but this was his only son by Sarah, his first and legitimate wife; who only had the right of succession both to his inheritance, and to his covenant and promises; and this only was now left to him, for Ishmael was abandoned and gone from him: and this must be such a son as *Isaac*, once matter of laughter and great joy, now cause of inexpressible sorrow; thy Benoni; a son of the promise, of so great hopes, and such pregnant virtue and piety as this story shows; *whom thou lovest*, peculiarly and superlatively, even as thy own soul: *and get thee into the land of Moriah*; a place at a great distance, and to which thou shalt go to leisurely, ver. 4, that thou mayst have thy mind all that while fixed upon the bloody act, which other men's minds can scarce once think of without horror; and so thou mayst offer him in a sort ten thousand times over before thou givest the fatal blow; *and offer him there* with thine own hands, and cruelly take away the life which thou hast in some sort given him; *for a burnt-offering*, wherein by the law of the burnt-offering then known to Abraham, afterwards published to all Israel, his throat was to be cut, his body dissected into quarters, his bowels taken out, as if he had been come notorious traitor, and vile malefactor and miscreant, and afterwards he was to be burnt to ashes, that if possible there might be nothing left of him: and this must be done *upon one of the mountains, which I shall tell thee of*; not secretly in a corner, as if it were a work of darkness, and thou wert ashamed or afraid to own it; but in a public and open place, in the view of heaven, earth, God, angels, and men. Which horrid and stupendous act it may be easily conjectured what reproach and blasphemy it would have occasioned against the name and worship of God and the true religion, and what shame and torment to Abraham, from his own self-accusing mind, from the clamours of his wife, and all his friends and allies, and what a dangerous and mischievous example this would have been to all future generations. That faith that could surmount these and many more difficulties, and could readily and cheerfully rest upon God in the discharge of such a duty, no wonder it is so honoured by God, and celebrated by all men, yea, even by the heathens, who have translated this history into their fables. *Moriah* signifies *the visions of God*, the place where God would be seen and manifested. And so it is here called by way of anticipation, because it was so called afterwards, ver. 14, in regard of God's eminent appearance there for Isaac's deliverance; though it may also have a further respect unto Christ, because in that place *God was manifested in the flesh*. There were divers mountains there, as is evident from Psal. 125:2; and particularly there were two eminent hills, or rather tops or parts of the same mountain; Sion, where David's palace was; and Moriah, where the temple was built, and whence the adjoining country afterwards received its name. *Which I will tell thee of*, by some visible sign, or secret admonition which I shall give thee.

(3) And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering,

and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

Abraham rose up early in the morning, that he might execute God's command without doubt or delay; and saddled his ass, for greater expedition, not waiting for his servant to do it.

(4) Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

Probably on the beginning of the third day. It is true, Moriah was not three days' journey from Beer-sheba. But it must be considered that the ass, upon which he rode, is a dull and slow creature, and that Abraham went no faster than the rest of his company, who, for aught appears, were on foot; and that the provisions which they carried along with them, both for their own and the ass's subsistence, and for sacrifice, must needs retard them.

(5) And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

Abraham said this, lest they should hinder him in the execution of his design. I and the lad will come again to you; for he knew that God both could and would for his promise sake, either preserve Isaac from being sacrificed, or afterward raise him from the dead, as it is intimated, Heb. 11:19.

(6) And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

Isaac, though called a *lad*, ver. 5, was now a grown man, at least five and twenty years old, and therefore well able to bear that burden; and in this act he was an eminent type of Christ, who carried that wood upon which he was crucified.

(7) And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

My father; a compellation which might both wound Abraham's heart, and admonish him how unbecoming to a father that action was which he was going about. Here am I, my son; which expression showed that he had not put off fatherly affection to him, and that his intention did not arise from any unnatural and barbarous disposition, nor from any decay of love to him, but from a higher cause, even the declared will of God.

(8) And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

God will provide himself a lamb; either, 1. Literally, though I know not how; for his wisdom and power are infinite; or, 2. Mystically, as Christ, whose type Isaac was, is called a Lamb. Thus Abraham prudently reveals the matter to him by degrees, not all at once.

(9) And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

Abraham built an altar, made of earth slightly put together, as God afterwards prescribed, Exod. 20:24; and bound Isaac his son, partly, because burnt-offerings were to be bound to the altar; of which see on Psal. 118:27; partly, to represent Christ, who was bound to the cross. And that Isaac might be the more exact type of Christ, he was bound by his own consent, otherwise his age and strength seem sufficient to have made an effectual resistance. It is therefore highly reasonable to think that Abraham, having in the whole journey prepared Isaac for such a work by general but pertinent discourses, did upon the mount particularly instruct him concerning the plain and peremptory command of God, the absolute necessity of complying with it, the glorious reward of his obedience, and the dismal consequences of his disobedience; the power and faithfulness of God either to prevent the fatal blow, or to restore his life lost with infinite advantage. Upon these, and such-like reasons, doubtless he readily laid himself down at his father's feet, and yielded up himself to the Divine will.

(10) And Abraham stretched for his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. (11) And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.

The angel of the Lord, i.e. Christ the Angel of the covenant, as appears from ver. 12, 16. He repeats his name to prevent Abraham, whom he knew to be most expeditious in God's service, and just ready to give the deadly blow.

(12) And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.

God knew the sincerity and resolvedness of Abraham's faith and obedience before and without this evidence, and from eternity foresaw this fact and all its circumstances; and therefore you must not think that God had now made any new discovery: but this is spoken here, as in many other places, of God after the manner of men, who is then said to know a thing, when it is notorious and evident to a man's self and others by some remarkable effect. Thus David prayed that God would *search and know his heart, and his thoughts*, Psal. 139:23, though he had before professed that God *understood his thought afar off*, ver. 2. This therefore is the sense, *Now I know*, i.e., Now I have what I designed and desired; now I have made thee and others to know. As the *Spirit* of God and of Christ is said to *cry Abba, Father*, Gal. 4:6, when it makes us to cry so, Rom. 8:15. *Thou hast not withheld thy son from me*, for my service and sacrifice; or *for me*, i.e. for my sake; i.e. thou hast preferred mine authority and honour before the life of thy dear son. By which words it appears that God himself speaks these words.

(13) And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind *him* a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

Behind him; which way he looked, either because the voice came that way, or because he heard the noise made by the motion of *the ram* in the thicket, which had gone astray from the rest of the flock, and whose errors were directed hither by God's wise and powerful providence; and being young, though horned, it might be called either *lamb*, as ver. 7, or *ram*, as it is here. There needs no curious inquiry how he could offer up that to God which was not his own, both because it was found in a public place, and in all probability utterly lost to its owner, and because he had no doubt a warrant and inspiration for it from the great Lord and Supreme Owner of all things.

(14) And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.

Jehovah-jireh. The same Hebrew letters differently pointed make the sense either active, *the Lord will see*, i.e. provide or take care of those that commit themselves and their affairs to him; or passive, *The Lord will be seen*, i.e. will appear and show himself in the behalf of all those that love him. *As it is said to this day*, wherein Moses wrote this book: this is still used as a proverb. *In the mount of the Lord*, i.e. in greatest extremities and distresses, as we say, *at the pit's brink, it shall be seen*, or, *the Lord shall be seen or manifested*. And although these words are used by way of remembrance of this great deliverance, and by way of accommodation to such-like eminent preservations from great dangers; yet they may have a further respect, and may signify, that this was but an earnest of further and greater blessings to be expected in this place, where the temple was built, and the Lord Christ was manifested in the flesh.