

Genesis 22:15-18

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God speaks again, saying that because of Abraham's faithfulness he will be blessed. God promises that Abraham's descendants will be many and they will conquer their enemies. Through Abraham's obedience, all the nations of the earth will be blessed.

After the ram is sacrificed as an offering to God, the *angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven*. This time, instead of commanding Abraham to cease, God pronounces upon Abraham the promise of a great reward for his faithfulness.

The promises of reward come in the form of an oath, *By Myself I have sworn, declares the Lord*. For God to swear by Himself means He expresses His most solemn promise ([Exodus 32:13](#); [Isaiah 45:23](#); [Jeremiah 22:5, 49:13](#); [Hebrews 6:13-18](#)). God's oath indicates His confirmation of the promises of reward to *Abraham*.

He makes this oath *because Abraham has done this thing and has not withheld his son, his only son*. Abraham's action of giving his son Isaac to God is the outward expression of his faith ([James 2:21-23](#)) and is rewarded by God. God had already declared Abraham righteous in his sight because Abraham believed ([Genesis 15:6](#)). This occurred apart from deeds. But now that Abraham has lived out and exhibited great faith by his actions, now God promises great rewards to *Abraham* because of his obedience, because Abraham has *obeyed God's voice*.

God offers Abraham a number of promises of reward:

1. *I will greatly bless you*

In [Genesis 12](#), God promised to give Abraham land if he would leave his home and follow the Lord to the place He would show him. In [Genesis 15](#), God granted the land to his descendants as a reward for Abraham's faithfulness to that point. Then, in [Genesis 17](#), when Abraham was ninety nine years old, although God had already granted the land to Abraham's descendants, God promised to "multiply you exceedingly" ([Genesis 17:2](#)) if Abraham would walk before God and "be blameless." The promise to "multiply

exceedingly” likely included much more than mere numbers. Now, in chapter 22, because of Abraham’s faithfulness, God confers an expanded extent of this promise as a reward. God is once again moving from a conditional promise of reward to conferring a reward for obedience. God says to Abraham *I will greatly bless you*. God promises an expanded blessing as a reward for Abraham’s obedience.

2. *I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore*

God had already promised Abraham that his offspring would be as numerous as the stars ([Genesis 15:5](#)). So this does not appear to be a new reward, but a repetition of an existing promise as part of the context of this expanded reward.

3. *And your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies*

This is a new promise not previously stated. In [Genesis 12:1-3](#), God promised Abraham that if he would follow Him to the country He would show him, that He would bless those whom Abraham blessed and curse those whom Abraham cursed. Now God expands this concept and pronounces it as a promise, that Abraham’s *seed* would *possess the gate of their enemies*. To *possess the gate* of an enemy meant to take over the authority of the enemy. The *gate* was the place of civic life, where judgements were made and where kings or authorities ruled. To *possess the gate* would mean to take over that authority.

God now promises to Abraham that those who are the *enemies* of his *seed* will be defeated. Abraham’s *seed* refers to his descendants ([Acts 3:25](#); [Galatians 3:16](#)). This promise was partly fulfilled when Israel occupied the land, when many of its enemies were defeated. But it has not yet been completely fulfilled.

4. *In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed*

The Apostle Paul cited this passage in [Galatians 3:16](#), and made the point that this promise refers to Jesus. Paul’s rationale is that the word *seed* is singular rather than plural, meaning that the promise is given to one person rather than many. Paul therefore explains that this is a promise of redemption for the world through the person of Jesus, who was descended from Abraham through Isaac, the child of promise.

God promised in [Genesis 12](#) that if Abraham would be faithful “in you all the families of the earth will be blessed” ([Genesis 12:3](#)). Now this promise is granted and expanded. God grants a promise of a specific blessing for *all the nations* through Abraham’s *seed*. This reference to *seed* likely connects with God’s promise in [Genesis 3:15](#) that He would put “enmity between you [the serpent] and the woman [Eve], and between your seed [the serpent’s seed] and her seed.” This instance of *seed* is also singular and has often been interpreted as referring to the promise of Jesus.

God restates the reason for the promised blessings—they are rewards God has granted *Because you have obeyed My voice*. It shows that God’s warnings and promises are often dependent on the response of the hearers ([Jeremiah 18:7-10](#); [Jonah 3:4-10](#)). The Bible says, “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams” ([1 Samuel 15:22b](#)). God rewards obedience with great blessings. In this case, God specifically told Abraham He would reward him for obedience. However, these blessings are still promises of future benefits. Abraham is not rewarded anything that he can possess immediately. [Hebrews 11:39-40](#) notes this, saying:

“And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect [or complete].”

This indicates that the great rewards in the coming Kingdom of Jesus on earth will create a greater reward because those who were faithful in the Old and New Testament periods will enjoy their reward together, ruling along with Jesus ([Revelation 3:21](#)).

Biblical Text:

¹⁵ Then the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, ¹⁶ and said, “By Myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. ¹⁸ “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”