

Genesis 22:4-8

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The two men stay with the donkey as Abraham takes Isaac, a knife, and the wood needed for the offering. As they walk, Isaac asks Abraham what they will sacrifice. Abraham replies that God will provide the lamb.

They travel for several days. Then, *on the third day*, Abraham discovers the place to where God led him. He *raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance*. We are not told how Abraham knew this was the place, but he clearly did know. His servants are no longer needed, so Abraham dismisses the two men, telling them to *Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you*. It is clear that Abraham expects to return with a living Isaac. Hebrews tells us that Abraham had concluded that God would raise Isaac from the dead ([Hebrews 11:19](#)). So in a real sense, this entire episode is God testing Abraham's willingness to take actions while fully trusting God's resurrection power.

Interestingly, this is the first occasion of the word "worship" in the Bible. This exhibits Abraham's great faith in God. Abraham believed God's promise, "through Isaac your descendants shall be named" ([Genesis 21:12b](#)). The future of the covenant revolved around Isaac, but God was asking Abraham to sacrifice him. Nevertheless, Abraham is willing to obey God because he believes that God's promise will be fulfilled, no matter the circumstances. He believed God would raise Isaac from death.

Abraham was first justified in the presence of God by faith ([Acts 7:1-4](#); [Genesis 15:6](#)). His faith in God was something God saw in Abraham's heart long before any other person would be able to observe it. But now Abraham is justified (shown to be righteous) in the presence of human onlookers because of his works ([James 2:21-22](#)). In fact, James is telling us by Abraham's works, his faith was "perfected" (perhaps better translated "completed").

In order to be justified before God, Abraham only had to believe. Such faith is only visible to God. But when Abraham put his faith into action, that was then something others could see. It was when Abraham acted that his faith showed maturation. His faith was revealed in an outward expression by his obedience. His obedience was rooted in Abraham's belief that God would fulfill His promise through Isaac. This is what James speaks of when he says Abraham

was justified by his deeds; Abraham was justified before men by his visible acts of faith. In this way, Abraham was an excellent witness.

Leaving his servants behind, *Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac to carry. As the two of them walked on together, Isaac raises a question.* Clearly he knows they are going to burn a sacrifice to God, but he sees that there is nothing to sacrifice. This tells us a number of things. First, that Isaac was old enough to have full awareness of what was taking place. Second, that Isaac was old enough to carry a sufficient amount of wood with which to make a *burnt offering*. It is common to estimate Isaac's age at roughly 25 years.

Isaac addresses Abraham, *My father!* And Abraham replies, *Here I am, my son.* Isaac lists their supplies, noting the lack of an animal to sacrifice, *Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?*

Abraham's reply is interesting, *God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.* Abraham knows who the intended sacrifice is, the very person asking the question: Isaac. Yet he does not tell his son outright that he is going to sacrifice him, for obvious reasons. He says that a *lamb* will be the sacrifice, even though he believes Isaac will be that lamb. Abraham ascribes the provision of a sacrifice to God, for it was God who made this request of Abraham. God is the provider of the *burnt offering*,

In Levitical sacrifice, the offerer himself provided the animal. Although Abraham was willing to sacrifice his own son, he believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead ([Hebrews 11:17-19](#)). It should be noted that there was no recorded case of resurrection at this time in the world's history. Abraham considered this God's problem to solve, because He had to keep His promise regarding Isaac's children. The immediate fulfillment of Abraham's trusting response was the ram in v. 13, but its ultimate fulfillment is the Lamb of God ([John 1:29,36](#)). Abraham believed it would come out right in the end. Abraham supplied his son for the sacrifice (foreshadowing Christ's sacrifice); likewise, God supplies His own son whom He loves for the sins of the world ([Matthew 3:17](#); [John 3:14-16](#)).

Abraham's answer satisfies Isaac's curiosity, for the conversation ends there, and *the two of them walked on together.*

Biblical Text:

⁴ On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. ⁵Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you.” ⁶ Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. ⁷ Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” And he said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” ⁸ Abraham said, “God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” So the two of them walked on together.