

# Genesis 22:9-12

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*When they reach the proper place, Abraham builds an altar and places the wood on top. He binds Isaac and places him on the wood. As Abraham takes the knife to slay his son, the angel of the Lord calls to him from heaven. The angel tells Abraham not to sacrifice Isaac. Now God knows Abraham fears God and is obedient.*

*They came to the place of which God had told Abraham. This location is a divinely ordained, sacred spot, chosen for a sacrifice. Clearly God had described the location sufficiently such that Abraham recognized it and knew he was in the right place. Many believe the place of sacrifice was on Mount Moriah in the same location of the temple's altar in Jerusalem, built by King Solomon (2 Chron 3:1). Some believe this was also the place David purchased from Araunah to build an altar to the LORD that he might halt the plague (2 Samuel 24:18-21).*

In great detail, this verse describes the preparations for the sacrifice: *Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.* The binding of Isaac is known in Jewish tradition as the "Aqedah" and is an example of the need to place faithfulness in *God* above all else. One can only imagine what was going through Abraham's mind during this preparation, as well as Isaac's. Isaac's faith in Abraham was quite amazing, allowing himself to be bound rather than running away. Isaac was possibly 25 years old at this time, while Abraham was 125 years old; a young man permitting his elderly father to bind him.

In extreme obedience to *God*, *Abraham stretched out his hand* to take the *knife* that he had brought *to slay his son*. However, *God* never intended for Isaac to be sacrificed. Later, it was made clear that child sacrifice was an abomination to *God* ([Leviticus 18:21](#), [20:1-5](#); [Deuteronomy 18:10](#); [2 Kings 16:2-3](#); [Isaiah 57:5](#); [Jeremiah 32:35](#)). *God* wanted *Abraham* to sacrifice his own will and give it to *God*. In that same vein, Job asked the question, "Shall we indeed accept good from *God* and not accept adversity" ([Job 2:10](#))? At the moment of truth, *Abraham* proved he was willing to *slay his son* out of total obedience to *God* and in complete faith that *God* would raise him up again. At this point, *God* intervenes to provide a substitute.

With *Isaac* bound and vulnerable, and Abraham's hand on the knife, the scene is halted by a voice. *The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven.* The *angel* speaks from *heaven*, similar to the deliverance of Hagar and Ishmael ([Genesis 21:17](#)). We can see the sense of urgency of the intervention through the repetition of Abraham's name, *Abraham, Abraham!* There are a number of times in the Bible where a person's name is repeated, always drawing attention to important questions or commands ([Genesis 22:11](#)). God also called twice to Jacob ([Genesis 46:2](#)) as well as Moses ([Exodus 3:4](#)); and Samuel ([1 Samuel 3:10](#)). Jesus called Martha's name twice ([Luke 10:41](#)) and Jesus called Simeon Peter's name twice when Satan had demanded to sift him ([Luke 22:31](#)). Jesus also called to His Father twice while on the cross ([Mark 15:34](#)); then called to Saul twice when summoning him to follow Him ([Acts 9:4](#)). Clearly, this emphasis of repeating Abraham's name was intended to make *Abraham* stop what *God* had earlier commanded. *Abraham* replies with his typical, *Here I am.* The *angel of the Lord* tells him to stop the sacrifice, *Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him.*

The test from *God* had accomplished its purpose. Doubtless, *Abraham* threw aside the knife, full of relief to be freed of the prior command. The *angel* explains why the sacrifice is not necessary, *for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.* This was the purpose of the test. Abraham's actions confirm his fear of *God*. The phrase, *now I know that you fear God* shows that tests are real. *God* has conferred upon humans a true choice. And the main thing *God* wanted to know was who Abraham placed a priority upon following. In this case, his own reasoning or *God's* command.

This entire ordeal was not to provide information to *God*, but to examine Abraham's obedience. *God* knew that Abraham feared *God* (Hebrew: "yare Elohim") because he was willing to give everything *God* demanded, even his son's life, committing to *God* the future which He had promised. It is clear that Abraham had determined it was in his best interest to fully comply with all *God* required. Abraham had learned to trust *God* through many years of obedience, and now had determined *God* would fully deliver on His promises. So Abraham fully obeyed all *God* commanded.

The Bible is clear that the *fear* of the Lord is the starting place for knowledge ([Proverbs 1:7](#)). It is also the beginning of wisdom, the skill of living well ([Proverbs 9:10](#)). *God* makes clear in this episode that it is in our best interest to hold all possessions with open hands, including stewardship of children and family. Following *God* in all ways is for our best.

*Isaac* represents God's promises to *Abraham*. Without *Isaac*, there is no heir, no nation, no promises, and no blessings. By asking *Abraham* to sacrifice *Isaac*, *God* is asking *Abraham* to demonstrate his complete trust in Him; in particular, *Abraham* trusted that *God* would raise *Isaac* from the dead. By willingly giving his *only son*, *Abraham* gains a multitude of offspring. Of course, *Isaac* was not *Abraham's only son*, he had one son by Hagar (Ishmael, [Genesis 16:15](#)) and six later on by Keturah ([Genesis 25:2-4](#)). But for the plans of *God*, *Abraham* only had one *son* of promise (*Isaac*, from a miraculous birth by Sarah, [Genesis 21:12](#)).

### **Biblical Text:**

**<sup>9</sup> Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. <sup>10</sup> Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. <sup>11</sup> But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." <sup>12</sup> He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."**