

The Life of Isaac: Fulfilling the Promises of God

Who is Isaac and what is his place in the Bible?

1. Isaac's place in history
 - a. Isaac was the offspring through whom God would fulfill His covenant (Genesis 15:1-6; 17:15-18:15).
 - b. Sees his father's faithfulness on a mountain in the land of Moriah, when Abraham moves to sacrifice him as the LORD had asked (Gen. 22:1-19). Note: Mt. Moriah was where the temple was built 2 Chronicles 3:1, and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, where Jesus was quite possibly crucified is also very close by.
 - c. Isaac takes a wife from among his father's family (Gen. 24).
 - d. Learns from his father's faith and prays to the LORD for offspring instead of trying to make it happen on his own strength (Gen. 25:21).
 - e. Gives in to the same fear his father did and lies about his wife being his sister (Gen. 26:6-11).
 - f. Isaac lives as a nomad (God tells him to be sojourner in Gen. 26:3), not yet having possession of the land God promised to Abraham's descendants (Gen. 24:62; 26:1, 17, 23; 35:27).
 - g. Passes the promises to Jacob (Gen. 27:26-29; 28:1-5).
 - h. Did not seem to die with the same peace that Abraham did.
 - i. Blessed Jacob instead of Esau (Gen. 27).
 - ii. Had to send Jacob away because Rebekah loathe Esau's Hittite wives and wanted him to get a wife from Abraham's family (27:46-28:5). Note: The fact that neither Abraham, Isaac, nor Jacob took wives from the Canaanites shows that God had His people set apart from the beginning.

Conclusion: Isaac was an imperfect person, a child and vessel of promise, and an ancestor of the promised savior.

2. Isaac's place in the overarching Biblical narrative
 - a. A foreshadowing of the coming life and death of Jesus. Similarities between the story of Isaac and that of Christ:
 - i. They were both promised children (Gen. 17:15-18:15; Gen. 3:15, Isaiah 7:14).
 - ii. It should have been impossible for either of them to be born (Gen. 18:11; Luke 1:34).
 - iii. They were both named before birth (Gen 17:9; Matthew 1:21 [to Joseph] and Luke 1:31 [to Mary]).
 - iv. They were "only" sons (Gen. 22:2, 12, Hebrews 11:17; John 3:16, 1 John 4:9). The Hebrew word translated "only" in Gen. 22 is used elsewhere to refer to only children (Jeremiah 6:26, Amos 8:10, and Zechariah 12:10). The Greek word is used in the same way multiple times, not just of Jesus, but also used in Heb. 11:17 to describe Isaac. They both have an air of singularity.

- v. Three days. Isaac traveled for three days, before his life was spared (Gen. 22:4), Jesus was dead and buried for three days before being resurrected (prophesied in Matt. 12:40, Mark 8:31, 9:31, and Jn. 2:19-21).
- vi. Isaac traveled to the mountain on a donkey (Gen. 22:3), and Jesus traveled into Jerusalem on a donkey (Matt. 21:7).
- vii. Isaac carried the wood on which he was to be sacrificed (Gen. 22:6), Jesus had a cross laid on his back (Jn. 19:16-17; the synoptic Gospels mention Simon of Cyrene carrying Jesus' cross. It's possible that the cross was laid on Jesus before being given to Simon.).
- viii. The Difference: Jesus knew he was the sacrifice.
- b. A vessel of promise, both fulfillment and continuance.
 - i. Was a child of promise (Gen. 17:15-18:15).
 - ii. God promised Abraham that He would establish His covenant with Isaac also (Gen. 17:21).
 - iii. God promised that Abraham's descendants would possess the gates of their enemies (Gen. 22:17), which is separately part of the blessing Rebekah receives from her family (Gen. 24:60).
 - iv. God reiterates to Isaac His promise to establish His covenant with Isaac (Gen. 26:1-5).
 - v. Passes on God's promise to Abraham to bless those who bless and curse those who curse (Gen. 12:3) to Jacob (Gen. 27:26-29).
 - vi. Officially passes the baton on to Jacob, including God's blessing to Abraham (Gen. 28:3-4).

Conclusion: Isaac is clearly not the one who would crush the head of the serpent, as promised in Genesis 3:15, but his life foreshadows the coming savior and shows the promise keeping character of God.

3. Application

- a. Looking forward to the return of the Savior. As Isaac's life pointed towards and anticipated the coming of a savior, so we should live in expectation of His return. As Isaac learned from his father and passed on his learning and the promises of God to his son, so should we learn from those who are wiser and teach those who are less mature.
- b. Having faith in the promises of God. Isaac's life clearly demonstrates that God will always keep His promises, even when it seems impossible. The God who fulfilled His promises then is the same God we worship now. We should have faith in His promises and trust Him to fulfill them, even when it seems like it will never happen. As for the continuing promises, or those that have not yet been fulfilled, we should teach the younger generations about God's faithfulness, and pass on His promises.