

Genesis 22:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the... This passage is part of the Abrahamic narratives which shift from universal human history to God's particular covenant people. The Abraham cycle (Genesis 12-25) demonstrates God's sovereign election, covenant faithfulness, and the development of faith through testing and promise fulfillment.

Central themes include God's unconditional covenant promises (land, descendants, blessing to nations), the call to faith and obedience, the testing of faith through delays and impossibilities, the contrast between divine promises and human schemes, and God's gracious persistence despite human failures. Abraham emerges as the father of faith whose trust in God's promises becomes the model for all believers (Romans 4, Galatians 3, Hebrews 11).

Theologically, these narratives establish:

1. salvation by grace through faith rather than works
2. covenant as God's gracious initiative binding Himself to His people
3. the necessity of patient trust when promises seem impossible
4. the consequences of attempting to fulfill God's promises through human effort
5. the pattern of divine testing producing mature faith.

The Abraham cycle foreshadows Christ as the ultimate seed through whom blessing extends to all nations (Galatians 3:16).

Historical Context

The patriarchal narratives (Genesis 12-50) reflect the cultural, social, and legal customs of the ancient Near East during the Middle Bronze Age (2000-1500 BCE). Archaeological discoveries including the Mari tablets, Nuzi tablets, and Egyptian records confirm many details: nomadic pastoralism, covenant-making ceremonies, marriage customs, property laws, and international travel patterns described in Genesis.

The cultural practices reflected include: treaty/covenant forms (Genesis 15), bride-price customs (Genesis 24, 29), inheritance laws favoring firstborn sons (Genesis 25, 27), adoption practices (Genesis 15, 30), levirate-type arrangements (Genesis 38), and Egyptian administrative systems (Genesis 41, 47). These parallels confirm Genesis's historical reliability while showing how God worked within ancient cultural frameworks to accomplish His purposes.

For later Israelites, these narratives established their identity as Abraham's descendants, explained their claim to Canaan, justified their possession of Joseph's bones (Exodus 13:19), and provided models of faith despite imperfection. The patriarchs' failures and God's faithfulness encouraged Israel that covenant relationship depended on God's grace rather than human merit. The movement from Mesopotamia to Canaan to Egypt set the stage for the Exodus and conquest narratives.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does this verse deepen our understanding of God's character and His relationship with creation?
2. What obstacles prevent us from living out the truths presented in this verse?
3. In what ways does this narrative foreshadow or typify aspects of Christ's redemptive work?

Interlinear Text

וַיָּבֹאוּ	אֶל	הַמָּקוֹם	אֲשֶׁר	אָמַר	לֵוִי	הָאֱלֹהִים	וַיִּבְנֶה	
And they came	H413	to the place	H834	had told	H0	which God	built	
H935		H4725		H559		H430	H1129	
שָׁם	אֲבֹרָהִם	אֶת	הַמִּזְבֵּחַ	וַיַּעַרְךָ	אֶת	לְעֵצִים:		
H8033	him of and Abraham	H853	an altar	in order	H853	the wood		
	H85		H4196	H6186		H6086		
וַיַּעֲקֹד	אֶת	יִצְחָק	בְּנוֹ	וַיִּשָּׂם	אֹתוֹ	עַל	הַמִּזְבֵּחַ	מִמֶּנּוּ
and bound	H853	Isaac	his son	and laid	H853	H5921	an altar	upon
H6123		H3327	H1121	H7760			H4196	H4605
לְעֵצִים:								
the wood								
H6086								

Additional Cross-References

James 2:21 (Sacrifice): Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?