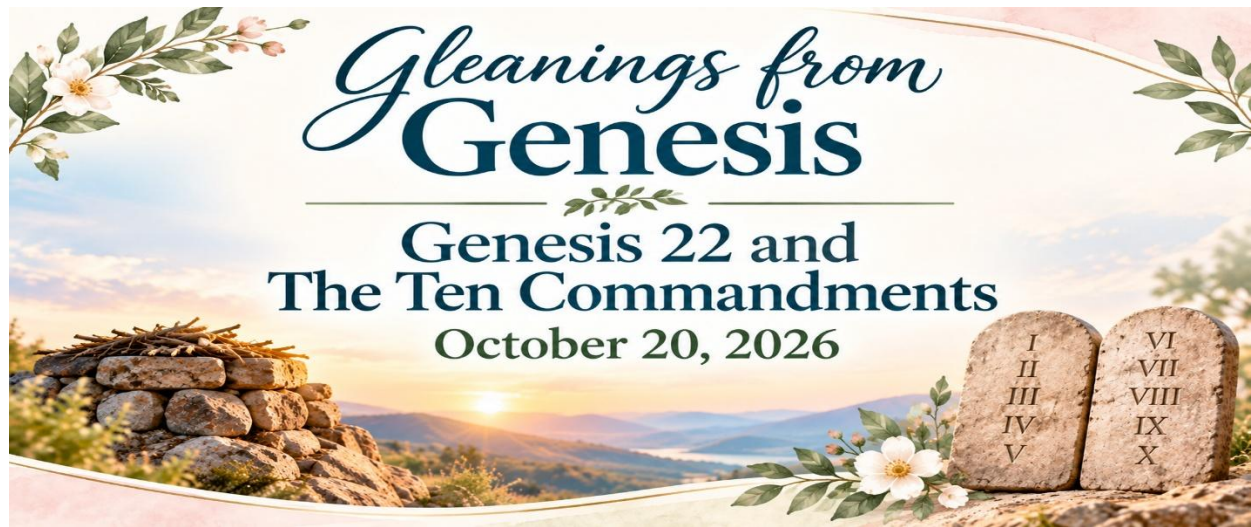




led by Mary Lowman

Isaac, Son of Promise and God Makes the Rules!

Genesis 22:1 – 3 (ESV)

After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."² He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."³ So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

Through the ages since God created the world and mankind, he has communicated to his people within their historical-cultural context. So, what was Abraham's cultural frame of reference when God told him to sacrifice Isaac?

When Abraham heard God's instructions to sacrifice Isaac, he heard it through the historical-cultural filter of that day. A pagan culture that include human sacrifice.

Abraham's immediate and complete obedience is also stunning.

Genesis 22:4 – 8

On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar.⁵ Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you."⁶ And 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 they went both of them together.⁷ And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"⁸ Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together.

Evidently Isaac was not expecting to be the sacrifice because as they made their way to the sacrificial site, he asked his father where was the lamb for the offering.

Genesis 22:9 - 14

When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.¹⁰ Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son.¹¹ But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."¹² He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."¹³ And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.¹⁴ So Abraham called the name of that place, "The Lord will provide - as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided."

Now everything changes. God intervened to stop a human sacrifice and provided a substitutionary sacrifice instead. God never again made such a demand of Abraham or his descendants. Eventually prohibition of child sacrifice was made part of the law of God.

Genesis 22:15 - 19

And 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 and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his^l enemies, ¹⁸ and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice." ¹⁹ So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba. And Abraham lived at Beersheba.

Now with thousands of years in hindsight, we can understand the purpose of God's command to Abraham to sacrifice his son.

Hebrews 10:11 – 14: *And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. ¹⁴ For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.*

John 10:17 – 18: *"For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."*

God is the Potter; this world and all of us in it are the clay in the Potter's hands. They are loving hands. But the fact is, he is God and we are not, and he does what he pleases!

Daniel 4:35: *All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, 'What have you done?'*

Isaiah 46:9 – 10: *I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.'*

Psalms 115:3: *Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.*

God used Abraham to fulfill his purposes for all the earth.

Hebrews 11:8 - 12

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. ¹¹ By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised.

¹² Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

God Makes the Rules

Now Moses enters the picture. God called on him to be the one who would set his people free from their slavery in Egypt.

Exodus 3:13 – 15: *Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” ¹⁴ God said to Moses, “I am who I am.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I am has sent me to you.’” ¹⁵ God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.*

God did not give himself a name but rather a title: *I Am has sent me to you.* . . this is his name forever. Think of all the *I Am*’s throughout Scripture:

Genesis 15:1b: *“Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.”*

Psalms 46:10: *“Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!”*

Isaiah 46:9: *...remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me...*

John 14:6: *I Am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life*

John 10:11, 14: *I Am the Good Shepherd*

In the book of Exodus the old covenant is laid out, specifying how the nation is to organize itself, who the priests are, and so forth, and above all discloses more of God. At the heart of this Old Covenant is a group of verses we call the Ten Commandments.

Exodus 20:1 – 19

And God spoke all these words, saying,² “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

³ *“You shall have no other gods before me.*

⁴ *“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.*

⁷ *“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.*

⁸ *“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor, and do all your work,*

¹⁰ *but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work,*

you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day.

Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

¹² *“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.*

¹³ *“You shall not murder.*

¹⁴ *“You shall not commit adultery.*

¹⁵ *“You shall not steal.*

¹⁶ *“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*

¹⁷ *“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”*

¹⁸ *Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off¹⁹ and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.”*

The Standard Protestant / Common Listing of The Ten Commandments

1. No other gods before me
2. No idols or carved images
3. Do not misuse the name of the Lord
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy
5. Honor your father and your mother
6. You shall not murder
7. You shall not commit adultery
8. You shall not steal
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor (do not lie)
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's house, wife, or possessions

You'll note that the first four commandments have to do with the people's relationship with God, and the second six have to do with relationships among each other. The first four commandments lead to the next six. It is because God is who he is and to be honored and revered that we should behave in a certain way—by the rules!

The First Commandment – No other gods before me.

God makes it very clear that he will not tolerate any other gods in our lives.

Exodus 22:20: *"Whoever sacrifices to any god, other than the Lord alone, shall be devoted to destruction."*

Exodus 23:13: *"Pay attention to all that I have said to you, and make no mention of the names of other gods, nor let it be heard on your lips."*

Exodus 34:14: *(for you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God)*

Isaiah 45:14b: *'Surely God is in you, and there is no other, no god besides him.'*

What does it mean that God is a jealous God? This is God's jealousy for his people because he wants to preserve his relationship with them.

The Second Commandment – No idols or carved images.

God made it clear that there would never be man-made images for them to worship. It reduces God somehow. He becomes something we can domesticate and therefore control.

The Third Commandment – Do not misuse the name of God

Philippians 2:9 – 11: *Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Is it any wonder that Satan has always tried to diminish and disrespect the name of God?

NEVER let yourself fall into a bad habit of "Oh, my God," or any other careless use of God's name.

Psalms 72:19: *Blessed be his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen and Amen!*

Are We Under the Law?

What did Jesus say about the Law?

Matthew 5:17: *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."*

Paul further explains the purpose of the law:

Galatians 3:24 – 25KJV: *Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.*

ESV: *So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.*

This does not mean you don't have to keep the law. It means you are not burdened by it as a job description of how to earn the wages of salvation.

The truth is, we have a greater obligation than just simply trying to keep these Ten Commandments. Jesus summed it up this way;

Matthew 22:34 – 40: *But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. ³⁵ And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" ³⁷ And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."*

Romans 13:8 – 10: *Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

Matthew 7:12: *"So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."*

1 John 4:7: *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.*

Galatians 5:6: *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.*

How does love fulfill the law?

Look at any of those Ten Commandments and ask yourself, if you love Jesus most and foremost, would you ever even consider murdering someone, or stealing? A little closer to home, would you ever consider committing adultery, or coveting what others have, or lying to your neighbor?

Closing

What is our take-away from these two lessons in the Bible?

- Can you trust God enough to obey when you don't understand? Abraham *chose* to obey God. It's a choice you make.
- What is God currently asking of you—how is God currently testing you? Are you reluctant to even acknowledge God's voice, much less obey?
- Are you willing to pray for the kind of love that would motivate you to please God and all he asks of you? To love God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself?
- Who are you finding it really hard to love right now? Have you asked God to help you see them the way he sees them? Would you be willing to allow God to put his love in your heart for that person or those people?