

Bible on Trial Sermon Series: The Binding of Isaac: Divine Child Abuse?

Let's read Genesis 22:1-14 (page 15 in the pew Bible, page 18 in the Spanish Bible)

Dawkins radio broadcast

Go to <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/backgroundbriefing/richard-dawkins-and-god/3379832> and download.
http://mpegmedia.abc.net.au/rn/podcast/2006/11/bbg_20061126.mp3 15:40-16:40

God ordered Abraham to make a burnt offering of his longed-for son. Abraham built an altar, put firewood upon him and trussed Isaac up on top of the wood His murdering knife was already in his hand, when an angel, dramatically intervened with the news of a last-minute change of plan. God was only joking, after all, tempting Abraham and testing his faith. A modern moralist cannot help but wonder how a child could ever recover from such psychological trauma. By the standards of modern morality this disgraceful story is an example simultaneously of child abuse, bullying in two asymmetrical power relationships and the first recorded use of the Nuremberg defense 'I was only obeying orders'. Yet the legend is one of the great foundational myths of all three monotheistic religions. Reading *The God Delusion*, p. 242.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UVoloVvsupM&list=PL41250EACC7782756>
:27-:59 Need to beep out the "f" word at 40-41 seconds

What was God thinking?

1. Test Abraham:

- A. God wanted Abraham to experience what it was like to trust and obey Him [100%](#).
 - God wanted Abraham to give back to Him that which he treasured [most](#).
 - God wanted Abraham to experience the test and its outcome for his (Abraham's) benefit.

- B. God wanted to experience Abraham's worship in the form of his faith, reverence and obedience.
 - God tested Abraham even though He already knew what the outcome of the test would be.

1 Chronicles 28:9 "The LORD searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts..."

Psalm 139:2-4

²You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
You understand my thought from afar.

³You scrutinize my path and my lying down,
And are intimately acquainted with all my ways.

⁴Even before there is a word on my tongue,
Behold, O LORD, You know it all.

Isaiah 46:9-10

"Remember the former things long past,
For I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is no one like Me,
¹⁰Declaring the end from the beginning,
And from ancient times things which have not been done,
Saying, 'My purpose will be established,
And I will accomplish all My good pleasure';

- God “now” knew (Gen. 22:12) not in the factual sense of gaining more information, but in the [experiential](#) sense. Gen 4:1 Adam knew Eve and she bore a son. So the word can and often does in the OT refer to experiencing something or some relationship, not simply knowing something factually.

Point: Abraham is 100% God's. God experienced it, and so did Abraham.

2. [Teach](#) Abraham: “I am different from all the Canaanite gods: I want you, not child (human) sacrifices!” -Yahweh

- The Canaanite gods did require child sacrifice. This is the whole point: Yahweh is [different](#).
- Sam Harris claims that God required or rewarded human sacrifice in the OT.
 - He lists seven OT scripture references as support. (*Letter*, p. 97)
 - He is completely wrong. Had he read the context he'd see that these texts do not at all require or reward human sacrifice.
 - God explicitly forbids child sacrifice. (Lev. 18:21; Deut. 12:29-31; 2 Kings 17:16-18; Jer. 19:4-6; Jer. 32:35; Ezek. 16:20-21; Psalm 106:34-40)

Lev. 18:21 You shall not give any of your offspring to offer them to Molech, nor shall you profane the name of your God; I am the LORD.

Deut. 12:29-31 “When the LORD your God cuts off before you the nations which you are going in to dispossess, and you dispossess them and dwell in their land, ³⁰ beware that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, ‘How do these nations serve their gods, that I also may do likewise?’ ³¹ You shall not behave thus toward the LORD your God, for every abominable act which the LORD hates they have done for their gods; for they even burn their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods.

2 Kings 17:16-18 They forsook all the commandments of the LORD their God and made for themselves molten images, *even* two calves, and made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal. ¹⁷ Then they made their sons and their daughters pass through the fire, and practiced divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him. ¹⁸ So the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them from His sight; none was left except the tribe of Judah.

Jeremiah 19:4-6 Because they have forsaken Me and have made this an alien place and have burned sacrifices in it to other gods, that neither they nor their forefathers nor the kings of Judah had *ever* known, and *because* they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent ⁵ and have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, a thing which I never commanded or spoke of, nor did it *ever* enter My mind; ⁶ therefore, behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when this place will no longer be called Topheth or the valley of Ben-hinnom, but rather the valley of Slaughter.

Jeremiah 32:35 They built the high places of Baal that are in the valley of Ben-hinnom to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through *the fire* to Molech, which I had not commanded them nor had it entered My mind that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.

Ezekiel 16:20-21 “Moreover, you took your sons and daughters whom you had borne to Me and sacrificed them to idols to be devoured. Were your harlotries so small a matter? ²¹ You slaughtered My children and offered them up to idols by causing them to pass through *the fire*.

Psalm 106:34-40

³⁴ They did not destroy the peoples,
As the LORD commanded them,

³⁵ But they mingled with the nations
And learned their practices,

³⁶ And served their idols,
Which became a snare to them.

³⁷ They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons,

³⁸ And shed innocent blood,

The blood of their sons and their daughters,
Whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan;
And the land was polluted with the blood.

³⁹ Thus they became unclean in their practices,
And played the harlot in their deeds.

⁴⁰ Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against His people
And He abhorred His inheritance.

- C. The God of Abraham is the God who would one day give His Son as an atoning sacrifice for sin. (John 3:16; Romans 8:32)

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? (Romans 8:32)

3. Provide a type: OT character or event that pictures in advance the person and work of Christ in the NT

¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; ¹⁸ it was he to whom it was said, “IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED.”

¹⁹ He considered that God is able to raise *people* even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.

- A. The story of the sacrifice of Isaac foreshadows God the Father’s offering the sacrifice of His “one and only son”. (Hebrews 11:17-19) Rather than being forced upon the Son as divine child abuse (Dawkins), the Father and Son cooperate on the plan. Christ willingly laid down His life and then took it up again (John 10:15-18) So contra Dawkins, the crucifixion was not an act of divine child abuse.

Gen. 22 is full of types and representations of the gospel. The Son, Isaac, is offered on wood, on a hill after a three day journey. Jesus, the Son, was offered on wood, on a hill, and was in the grave for three days... God revealed the gospel in hidden form. - Matt Slick

- B. God did not ask of Abraham something that He Himself did not later do.

What was Abraham thinking?

1. Abraham lived in a culture where child sacrifice to gods was the common practice.

- He was no doubt sad, but he probably did not think it an unusual command, given his very limited knowledge and understanding of God.
- Remember, Abraham met God in Gen. 12 (page 8 in the pew Bible) and God asks this in Gen. 22 (page 15 in the pew Bible).

2. Abraham reasoned that God would raise Isaac from the dead, because he believed God’s clear and repeated promise that Isaac was the son of the promise who would have numerous offspring. (Hebrews 11:19)

“It would not, I think, shock Abraham to believe that God would ask him to sacrifice his son. That’s the culture he lives in. Abraham is still learning a lot about the God who called him out of Ur and into Canaan. This God who called Abraham is speaking in a language Abraham would understand, in order to communicate to Abraham something new, which is: God hates the sacrifices of the Canaanites.... I suggest that the command not abhorrent to Abraham, the act was abhorrent to God, and to think otherwise is to reason anachronistically.” Posted by John Piippo

That’s why Abraham told his servants before he headed to Mount Moriah with Isaac, “We will worship and then we will come back to you.” (Gen 22:5)

“The critic’s task, then, is to show why Abraham, given what he knew, shouldn’t obey God’s command.”
- Paul Copan, Is God a Moral Monster?

What was Isaac thinking?

1. Isaac wondered where the sacrifice was. (Gen. 22:7-8)
2. Is it possible that the "lad" Isaac willingly submitted?

Sam Harris admits that "many of their victims were of the same opinion, in fact, and went willingly to slaughter" (Letter to a Christian Nation, p. 94)

3. Isaac was a big enough and strong enough "lad" to carry split wood up the mountain (22:3 and 6), and enough split wood to burn a sacrifice upon.

- However old Isaac was, Abraham was 100 years older.
- Maybe Isaac could have resisted Abraham, but didn't. Abraham bound Isaac, meaning he tied him up.

"A modern moralist cannot help but wonder how a child could ever recover from such psychological trauma. By the standards of modern morality this disgraceful story is an example simultaneously of child abuse... and the first recorded use of the Nuremberg defense 'I was only obeying orders!'"

- Dawkins, The God Delusion, p. 242.

4. Truth be told, Isaac did not grow up to be an ax murderer.

- A. He's the kind of guy who goes out into the field alone in the evening and has quiet time with the Lord. (Gen. 24:63)
- B. He became loving husband to Rebecca and father to Esau and Jacob. (Gen. 24:67)
- C. He became a very successful and wealthy farmer and rancher. (Gen. 26:12-14)
- D. He settled his disputes with thieving, lying enemies peacefully. (Gen. 26)
- E. He listens to God, obeys God, worships God and is blessed by God for the rest of his life. (Gen. 26)
- F. He stayed married to the same woman all his life, no cheating, no polygamy, no concubines, no homosexuality. The New Atheists can't make that claim!
- G. Seems that Isaac benefitted from his father's submission and obedience to God.

What do you think?

"What if someone today says, "God told me to kill my son."?"

Answer, "No he didn't. God tested Abraham and Abraham passed the test. God never intended that Abraham kill Isaac. Read the account in Genesis 22. God hates human sacrifice. God explicitly forbids human sacrifice. Go read Lev. 18:21; Deut. 12:29-31; 2 Kings 17:16-18; Jeremiah 19:4-6; Jeremiah 32:35; Ezekiel 16:20-21; Psalm 106:34-40.

Message

Saving faith shows in and shapes your life.
So does its absence.

Action Points:

- God wants me to give back to Him that which I treasure most. Exodus 20:2-3 includes anyone, any relationship, any situation, any desire, any dream, anything.
- God wants me to lay myself (including it from #1 above) on the altar as a sacrifice to Him. (Romans 12:1)
- God wants me to entrust to Him (to offer up to Him) my joys and my dreams, my hopes and my fears.
- God wants me to be 100% His.