

# The Promised Son

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[ 0 : 00 ] This series that we're talking about, Looking to the Rock, right? It's Looking to the Rock, and what it is, it's going through the Bible and looking at how all the stories in the Bible are actually unified.

They're telling one big story. And it's cool because this story, as this history, spread across millennia, and yet, despite the differences in location and people, that it is all a part of what God is doing in and through humanity to bring about his purpose of redemption.

And so that means that we aren't just New Testament people. Those of you familiar with the Bible, there's two big books, and Jesus shows up in the New Testament, but we think, well, what does the Old Testament have to say about anything?

Actually, the whole Bible is pointing to and whispering the name of Jesus all the time. It's just really hidden. And one guy, Alec Moindier, he wrote this book called Looking to the Rock.

He says, the Bible is this book that has all the answers toward the back. But we can't truly and fully appreciate who Jesus is and why he came unless we get the first act of the play, right?

[ 1 : 06 ] We need to understand why he needed to come. We need to understand the bad news. As much as we understand the good news of when Jesus came, we need to understand all the types that were pointing to him and the anticipation and the prophecies about him because it gives us a fuller picture of this person of Jesus as he shows up on the scene in the first century and in the Gospels.

Okay? And so it's important for us. And so what we see and what we started with last week was jumping in to Genesis at the very beginning and seeing like at the fall, yes, we sinned, man sinned, and because of that all creation and all humanity is under the curse of sin.

We are stained by sin. We are born into sin. But this is a story that starts with a promise right from the beginning. God intervenes. God shows up. God calls Adam and Eve out of hiding, and he preaches the gospel.

God is the first one to preach the gospel of the good news. And he talks about this seed of Eve, this one that would be born from a woman later on in history, anticipating this Jesus, this Messiah, and describes him simply as the crusher of the serpent's head.

And it's speaking of Satan. And so we're brought into this thing of God saying, hey, somebody's coming. Somebody is coming to resolve what you broke. And so we're looking forward to that.

[ 2 : 30 ] And then he establishes the law of atonement by covering Adam and Eve with skins of animals. And so today we are going to see God's rescue plan continuing on, becoming a little more vivid in picture, and it still talks about seeds and sacrifices.

So Genesis 17 verse 1, it says this. When Abraham was 99 years old, 99 years old, how old is that? Pretty old, right? Like I played, you know, a little bit of ultimate Frisbee yesterday, and I'm 42.

I felt old at the end. Abraham's 99, all right? So the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, I am God Almighty.

Walk before me and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you and may multiply you greatly. Then Abram fell on his face, and God said to him, Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations.

No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham. For I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you.

[ 3 : 45 ] And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.

This is God's word. So what we see here is God doing something very specific, right? As time has gone on from Adam and Eve, many children have been born, many generations have passed, and then suddenly this man Abraham shows up on the scene.

God selects him. He calls him out of the Ur of the Chaldees, like the place where his dad had resided, where all his family was, and he said, You're going to leave your father's house, and you're going to go to the land that I have set apart for you.

And this language that keeps popping up in the life of Abraham and that God keeps speaking to him about is this word covenant. Covenant keeps coming, keeps reoccurring and being talked about all the time.

[ 4 : 51 ] And actually, I would say to understand God and how he is working out throughout history, this work of redemption, we have to understand covenant. We have to understand what it means.

And what is happening here between God and Abraham is God is creating and defining the relationship. Okay? He is creating this relationship.

He singled out Abraham, and he's setting him apart, something unique and special. He is not relating this way to anybody else in the world at this time, just Abraham. And he comes and he says to you, Me and you are having this specific, special relationship, but God clearly defines it.

And he always does. All God's relationships throughout the Bible are held in covenant in his covenant promises and covenant expectations. And so the best way to understand your relationship with God, this means something for us today, the best way for you to understand your relationship with God is getting familiar with what covenant is.

And the verses we just read are actually a great example of this. In God's covenants, he is always the initiator, right? We don't go to God and say, hey God, I want to have a relationship with you.

[ 6 : 02 ] It's always God who comes. And pursues us and finds us and initiates. He's the one who calls us out just like he did to Abraham. And guess what? In the covenant, he's not only the initiator, he is also the superior one in the covenant.

He doesn't call us to become equals to him, right? Now other man-made covenants that have existed, it's men coming together, but they're coming together as equals often.

It's one side. No one side is superior to the other. And in those cases, the two sides come together with their needs and expectations and an agreement is kind of hammered out and both have an equal say and no one person has any authority over the other.

But that's not the way God's covenants work. He is the superior. And Abram recognized this, which is why it says he fell on his face, right?

That's what people do before kings. Nobody is falling on their face before me. My wife to date has never done that in my presence. And it's why some people take this posture of bowing on their knees in prayer or during worship before God.

[ 7 : 10 ] It's this posture of recognizing that he is greater than I am. He is superior to me in this relationship. But this superiority is expressed by God in a few different ways in these verses.

So first he makes promises to Abraham. He makes promises to bless Abraham, right? Hebrews 7, 7 points out, it is without dispute, it says in that verse, that the inferior is blessed by the superior.

It's actually, he's referring back to this covenant that God is making with Abraham. The fact that God can even make these promises to the scale that he does proves he is superior in every way.

It requires him to be almighty. He says, I am almighty. It requires him. Think about that. He can guarantee to Abraham that his offspring will be given a place among the nations of the earth.

Who among us can guarantee that? Nobody. And who among us can guarantee that even that we can become a great nation in and of ourselves, which proves that God is superior, that he is endless in days.

[ 8 : 18 ] He can fulfill these promises across generations generations in the generations to come, long after Abraham is dead. But I want to draw our attention to another intriguing aspect, an exercise of God's authority.

Notice how God changes Abram's name to Abraham. And I want to bring this up because names back then were more than just an identification. It's more than me like, oh yeah, who's that guy, Jesse?

Oh yeah, that's his name, Jesse. No, no, they communicated in the ancient world. Names were used to communicate something meaningful about a person and a place. Think about Leah, Jacob's wife.

Remember, if you're familiar with the story, Leah and Rachel, she is, they both end up married to the same guy, but Jacob favors Rachel and not Leah. And so in her anguish, she's like the despised sister.

She's the unloved sister, but then God opens her womb and blesses her with children. And so she names her sons in a way that describes what they meant for her own story of how, what God is doing and what he did.

[ 9 : 25 ] And names given by parents often were monuments of remembrance about God's intervention and blessing and what he did at a particular time. But naming something is also an act of authority.

That's how the ancient world understand these things. A parent exercises parental authority over their children by naming them. When Adam named all the animals, the ancient world would have seen that as like, oh, Adam was exercising authority over that part of creation by naming them. When kings would conquer nations, they would often take captives and they would rename those captives. For instance, if you look at Daniel, it says, you know, when Israel got sacked by Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar led a bunch of captives out.

Daniel is one of those guys. Well, guess what? He got renamed to a Babylonian name, Beltshazzar, which is a way worse name than Daniel, to be perfectly honest, but that was his Babylonian name.

But in doing that, what is happening here? The king, Nebuchadnezzar, is exhibiting his authority and his superiority over Daniel in that moment. And Daniel, he goes there and he gets reeducated in Babylonian custom and history and myth and dress and language.

[ 10 : 34 ] So his very identity is changed from one kingdom to a new kingdom all the way down to his name, down to the essence of who he is. And this is the thoroughness of being transformed into belonging to a new king and a new kingdom.

So in renaming Abram to Abraham, God is showing himself superior. But notice here how God flexes his superiority. He is extremely generous.

He is so generous toward Abraham. He gives him a new name. He promises him a land, not only for him, but for the generations and the nation that is gonna come forth from him.

He says it's gonna be established forever, this new kingdom. God, what he is doing, he's making these promises, but he's taking responsibility. He's owning all these promises. He is giving and guaranteeing what Abraham can't do.

But we also have to recognize that the covenant here comes with an expectation on Abraham as well. What does God say? You must walk before me and be blameless. So we should all be saying at this point, pump the brakes, wait a second.

[ 11 : 48 ] Not as easy as I thought. This is a pretty tall order. Be blameless, but it whispers back what this is doing. It's pointing back, it's hinting at what God purposed from the very beginning at creation, which is what he is intent on restoring.

God uses covenant to redeem and restore what we lost through sin. See, in Eden, God would come walking in the cool of the day to be with Adam and Eve. But in their sin, they hid themselves from God instead of walking before him and with him.

So we see God's purpose in this covenant he's making with Abraham is to restore what was lost in Eden. That's what he is wanting. That's what he is on about. Don't hide from me, Abraham.

Walk before me and with me. And sin keeps us from doing this. Sin means we all fall short of being blameless and therefore are unfit to walk with God.

Now, I want to draw our attention to the fact that Hebrew word for blameless there, I'm not going to try to pronounce it. It's a Hebrew word and I'll probably get it wrong. It's used 85 times throughout the Old Testament.

[ 12 : 58 ] And on the rare occasion, when it's used to reference people, it's always connected to our conduct. Like Psalms 15, 1 and 2 is a great example of this. Who can dwell in God's tent, it says, or ascend to his holy hill.

He who walks blamelessly. Who can be in God's presence? Who can abide with him? Who can remain with him? Who can stand before him? He who walks blamelessly.

Blameless, being blameless, is the bullseye our lives are meant to be aimed at. And that word blameless is also used to describe God's nature on occasion.

God isn't trying to be blameless. It's actually in the Bible, it always describes God as blameless, which means he is perfect and all his ways are perfect. It's who God is. So here's the thing. When you think about what God's desiring of us to walk blameless, and he is blameless, when we do walk blameless, what we are doing is we are becoming good reflections or good image bearers of God.

[13:56] We are reflecting his nature and his character like a mirror does. And that's why God cares about Abraham being blameless. That's why he cares about us even being blameless.

The more we are like God, the more we reflect him, and the more others see him in and through us. But the problem is, is that sin shatters that mirror.

Right? When you look at a mirror that's whole, you could see a pretty good reflection very clearly, right? When a mirror is shattered and shards all over the place, you just get tiny little, it's

fragmented, it's confusing, you just get tiny little pieces and peaks of what is being reflected.

And what we are seeing here, God is making a covenant with Abraham to redeem and restore what has been lost through sin. God uses a lot of the same language even as he did in the creation accounts in Genesis 1 and 2, right?

In Genesis 1 and 2, he tells Adam and Eve, be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, rule over it. And then he places Adam and Eve in a particular place, Eden. Here we see God telling Abraham again, I will multiply you greatly.

[15:06] I will make you the father of many nations. Or your offspring is going to fill the earth. Kings will come from you. You're going to be ruling. And I'm going to put you in a particular place, Canaan, the land of Canaan.

We see the similarities here. We see this unfolding story that God is writing. But also we see that he is the primary actor, especially in this covenant.

He's not saying, Abraham, you go do this. He said, I will, I will, I will. God is taking responsibility for carrying through what he is asking, what he is expecting.

He's promising Abraham he's going to accomplish all those things. But again, the stipulation is that Abraham has to walk blamelessly. So the question that I want to ask, and we should be asking, well then what if Abraham doesn't?

What if he blows it? What if he sins? What is his hope? Does that mean the covenant's done? God tries again with another dude? This is a serious problem.

[16:10] But I think what God's trying to get at and God's trying to teach us here isn't to say like, hey guys, you need to reach sinless perfection. I think it's meant to expose how hopeless we really are and to teach us our need for grace.

See, we are hopeless without outside help. To be in a God covenant, we are really hopeless without any outside help. Overwhelmingly, in the New Testament, the word blameless is used to describe a perfect spotless animal to sacrifice to God to atone for sin.

So when you sin, when you and I sin, there is a perfect substitute to bear the penalty and satisfy God's demand to be blameless. This is the law of atonement. Remember, God established that right from the beginning with Adam and Eve, the law of atonement and God uses that, right?

And God, the law of atonement is by which God can make such a covenant with Abraham as he did and expect it not to fail. So with the understanding, with this understanding, we see that Abraham can be blameless.

Yeah, he aims to walk upright and righteous and be righteous in his conduct, to walk before God and try not to sin and fight sin. But when he does sin, there's an atoning sacrifice that can be made that he can offer to satisfy the covenant stipulation.

[17:32] But that sacrifice has to be perfect, spotless, blameless, a sinless animal, which makes, actually, the next part of the story less confusing. So we're going to jump from chapter 17 to Genesis 22.

And God comes to Abraham and he says this in verse 1, after these things, God tested Abraham and said to Abraham and said to him, Abraham, and he said, here I am. 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 will tell you.

So not only is God demanding a human sacrifice, which is breaking from the norm, he is demanding the sacrifice of Abraham's only son, the very son that God said he would use to carry out the covenant promises to Abraham, right?

Isaac is a young man at this point. He's unmarried. He has no children. So if he dies, how does the covenant carry on? It can't carry on. God is also making a clear distinction here between Isaac and Ishmael, Abraham's other son.

God says, Isaac is your only son, Abraham, which is what he's doing. He's placing Ishmael outside of God's covenant with Abraham.

[18:57] So there's no fallback plan here. Now, I just want to say this rejection of Ishmael kind of sounds a little harsh at first, but it is consistent with God's purpose and his purpose of redemption.

See, Abraham and Sarah, they got so old, 99, remember? And she was probably close to the same age that having a child for them at that age was impossible.

It wasn't even like a maybe. It was like, man, it had been like decades before childbearing options and possibilities were relevant for them. So what they did is they took upon the responsibility to fulfill God's covenant for themselves.

And so Abraham made a baby with Hagar, Sarah's handmaid. Right? And before you think poor Sarah, I just want to point out it was her idea.

Right? I mean, even Jerry Springer doesn't get this weird. But according to God and his covenant purposes and what he is going to do to fulfill this covenant, Ishmael doesn't count.

[20:01] He doesn't recognize Ishmael as a possibility. He is not the son of the covenant promise. See, we can't fulfill God's part of his covenant. Whenever we do that, it exposes that we have more faith in ourselves than we do in God.

And God rejects these as faithless works. He calls them dead and worthless. In Galatians, actually Paul talks about this.

He draws a difference between Hagar and Sarah. He draws a difference between a son born of the flesh through natural means, natural means and works, through the son born of the spirit.

And in God's covenant, in his new covenant, Jesus, we are sons and daughters born of the spirit, not of the flesh. And the whole point that Paul is driving at and making a little bit later on is, hey, you started in the spirit.

Why are you trying to finish in the flesh? But we do that all the time, guys. And we come to Jesus, he saves us, and we start in the spirit and then we try to, oh yeah, God, I'm going to start fulfilling your end of the responsibilities here in the covenant that you've made with me.

[21:12] But we can't do that. Those things are worthless. And this teaches us an unchanging truth. Keeping covenant is only possible through faith. And it's only possible through faith that God will do what he promised.

Isaac wasn't born because of Abraham and Sarah's natural effort. He had to open Sarah's womb supernaturally. The son that came to fulfill God's promise was a miracle supplied by God's power, not Abraham's.

So, getting back to what God just told Abraham to do, it is a bit strange now that God now demands this son, and he goes out of his way of pointing out not just your only son, the son that you really love.

God's not like, he's understanding what's going on here. I want him to be sacrificed. And so, man, this is weird. This is, what is God doing here?

And it's hard to understand unless God is up to something, and he is, though Abraham couldn't see it just yet. And that's the essence of faith, guys, for all of us. It's obedience to God even when we don't fully understand.

[22:18] But, here's the other part of this. There is a reward that comes through faithful obedience. There is a reward that comes to us through faith-fueled obedience, which is actually hinted at in verse 2 in the very name Moriah, where God says, go to the land of Moriah to sacrifice your son.

Moriah is a compound word combining vision and Jehovah, which is a name for God. It's the covenant name for God that when God covenanted with Abraham, he revealed himself as Jehovah. And so, God is calling Abraham to the land of Jehovah's revelation.

Think about that. obedience to God often leads to a deeper revelation of who God is. And this is the reward of living by faith. And this insight makes the story just more potent.

God calls Abraham to journey to the land where Jehovah reveals. And there, he must sacrifice his only son on the mountain of his choosing. What is emerging here?

What you begin to see is this subtle silhouette of a greater story of redemption through Jesus. So, with that in mind, as we're seeing that redemptive story lens fulfilled in Jesus, let's read on.

[ 23 : 29 ] Verse 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.

On the third day, Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. 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.

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 and Isaac said to his father Abraham, said to his father Abraham, My father.

And Abraham said back to him, Here I am, my son. He said, Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering? Abraham said, God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.

So, they both went, of them went together. And 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.

[ 24 : 32 ] Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, Abraham, Abraham. And he said, Here I am. 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.

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.

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. So why does Abraham make such a journey, climb the mountain, bind his son, raise the knife to slay him?

Because he believed God would keep his promise. In fact, it says in Hebrews that he was able, he believed that God was able to even raise his son from the dead if needs be.

God was able to fulfill his promise, was able to defeat the most mightiest of foes, which is death. But that is what faith in God requires us up to that point, just as we see in Abraham here, he is willing to give everything.

[ 25 : 49 ] And faith in God means holding nothing back. God stops Abraham at the last possible moment. He knew that Abraham was willing to give him everything, his most precious thing.

And faith, what it does, it leads us into obedience. And it requires obedience that surrenders all we are and all we have to God. It lives open-handed and generous toward God.

And in many ways, this story demonstrates what covenant faith requires of us. Total surrender, total submission, and total trust in God. Faith believes that regardless of what God demands or what he brings us through, that God, despite those things, is always good and his purposes and plans are always blameless.

And when you and I live by faith, what is going to happen, we're going to go through some hard times, we're going to go through some things where we're just like, man, God, this makes no sense at all. I can't see what you're doing and what you're on about.

But, as we are obedient and faithful to follow him through every passing, through every moment, through every season, what we begin to see is we step into a greater vision of who God is.

[ 27 : 02 ] We step into a greater vision of his love. We step into a greater vision of his goodness. We step into a greater vision of his kindness and his supervision and his care and his comfort.

Yes, he leads us into some difficult paths sometimes, but they produce a reward much deeper.

They produce a deeper trust in the goodness of God. And in this particular story, what we also see is that Abraham's obedience secures the covenant promise for all his offspring.

In verse 15, the angel of the Lord comes to Abraham and says, By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord. God's telling this to Abraham. I have sworn now because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 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 enemies and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed because you have obeyed my voice.

One man's obedience, one man's obedience brought security and blessing to the many. One man's obedience brought security and blessing to all the sons and daughters that were going to be born behind him.

Abraham acted as a representative for all his children and all his grandchildren and great, great, great, great grandchildren. His obedience secured the covenant on their behalf and yet it was not only Abraham who was obedient and submitted, Isaac was as well and this is the pattern that points to a better covenant.

[ 28 : 48 ] It's not about me and you doing what we can to secure the covenant promises of God. What we see is that God secured and fulfilled a better covenant in Jesus.

How could an old man past the age of 100 secure a strong young man and bind him and put him on an altar? He couldn't. Isaac had to be willing to surrender himself to be bound and to get up on that altar as a sacrifice.

The covenant is secured through a faithful father and an obedient son. Jesus is the obedient son. Our father in heaven is the faithful father.

And Jesus became the perfect blameless lamb that was slain to take away our sins. Where Abraham laid the wood on his son to climb the mountain, Jesus took the wood of the cross on himself to climb another mountain.

Isaac climbed up on an altar as a sacrifice, not fully knowing, not fully understanding, hoping that God would intervene. Jesus, on the other hand, chose to be bound to the cross, knowing that a sacrifice would secure for us an unbreakable covenant.

[ 30 : 03 ] On the mountain where the Lord provides, Isaac was saved through God providing a ram to be sacrificed. On Calvary, the mountain of the Lord's provision, Jesus was the sacrificial lamb.

that was sacrificed in our place. In this new covenant, you and I are called to walk blameless, but the difference is, we know this, Jesus did it for us and he is working it out in us.

We live by faith in his finished work and in the power he gives us by the Holy Spirit to live for him.

Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise that through Abraham, the seed of Abraham, all the nations of the earth will be blessed.

Jesus is this promised son and through faith in him, we too become sons of the promise, daughters of the promise and we become the family of God, the church, the called out ones and through the church, Jesus is bringing still today the blessing to the nations and we do that through proclaiming salvation in him alone and talking about and explaining the inheritance of eternal life through faith in him alone.

As the band comes up, I just want to say this, if you are not yet a follower of Jesus, I want to make it very clear, there is nothing, nothing, nothing you can do, no sacrifice you can make that will save you, that will bring you into a relationship with God and there is no possibility for you to be blameless.

[ 31 : 41 ] Jesus had to die for your sins but all you have to do is believe. You have to believe that he is God's only son who came and died on a cross for your sins and he rose again on the third day defeating the power of death and he did that for you and in your place and salvation comes through belief in that and believing in that and holding fast to that in faith and that's it and I want to invite you today, man, if that's you, do not put this off.

Do not put this off. God says, man, today is the day of salvation. You don't know what's waiting for you outside. Come to him today. Believe on him. Surrender to him. If you are here and you are a follower of Jesus, I want to remind us life starts in faith and it continues in faith.

All of life is faith. All of life is trusting in who God is and all that he says he is and I think God is asking each of us today and what area of life are you struggling to trust me with?

What area are you holding back from me? And by faith, I want to encourage you today. Come, man, God is a gracious God. Man, come. With whatever that is, come and ask God to show you or ask God to give you the strength and the grace to surrender that to him and to live in obedience.

Come and ask him, Lord, yeah, I believe, but man, I have so much unbelief as well. Help me. Help me in my unbelief. And he is faithful. God loves those prayers and he loves to answer those prayers.

[ 33 : 14 ] Right now, we are going to transition to communion. Communion is a sign of and a remembrance of the covenant God made.

And it reminds us that he did it, not us. He did it. He initiated. He took the responsibility on himself. And as we take the bread and drink the cup, we are being reminded of all the covenant promises that come with being in relationship by faith in Jesus.

Man, sin's power is defeated. Death is no longer a thing that has a hold over us. God sent his son to die on a cross for us.

And the night that he was betrayed, Jesus told his disciples to remember him this way. He said, this is my body broken for you, anticipating the cross. Take and eat in remembrance of me. Let's eat together.

And likewise, he took the cup and he said, this is the cup that represents the blood of the covenant, the blood shed for you to actually secure this new covenant.

[ 34 : 35 ] And so, as often as you drink it, drink it in remembrance of me. Let's drink together. Let's drink together. Let's drink together. Let's drink together. Let's drink together.