

EXPLORATION: BIBLE

By Chip Thompson

Jesus said... “If you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me” (John 5:46). The question is, “When did Moses write about Jesus?”

SCARLET THREAD #3

ABRAHAM AND ISAAC POINT US TO JESUS

Today our story begins near a biblical city named Hebron, at an ancient site called Mamre.



PHOTO BY CHIP THOMPSON, 2014

King Herod the Great to commemorate Mamre built these ruins 2,100 years ago. Inside this structure is a spring (upper center). Abraham used this spring to water his sheep.

It was near this spring that Abraham pitched his tent and here Yahweh, God of Israel, visited Abraham (Genesis 18:1-15). In this place, God promised to give Abraham (age 100) and his wife Sarah (age 90) a son. Shortly thereafter, an amazing conception happened and 9 months later Abraham and Sarah gave birth to a son named Isaac.

Then in Genesis 22:1-2 the Bible says, “God tested Abraham.” He commanded him, “Take 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.” This is shocking! Why would God do this?

In the story, God directed Abraham to a specific mountain peak located in the land of Moriah.



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Beneath this gold dome is a rock, it is the peak of Mount Moriah. The Islamic “Dome of the Rock” built in 685 AD was constructed on the ruins of the 2nd Jewish Temple (destroyed in 70 AD by the Romans) which in turn was built on the foundations of Solomon’s Temple (destroyed in 586 BC by the Babylonians).



PHOTO: BEAUTYOFISLAM (FAIR USE ACT)

A view from inside the Dome of the Rock, looking down on the peak of Mount Moriah, reveals the rock where this story took place.

It is unlikely that Moses understood the importance of the story or how it would later connect to the Jewish Messiah but, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Moses recorded an event that perfectly pictures the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Only God could have orchestrated such an amazing story.

You may have already noted how the unusual conception of Isaac, born to parents far past childbearing age, points to an even more unusual conception. By the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was miraculously conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary, as Isaiah stated, “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us” (Matthew 1:20-23).

Now, consider how the rest of the story prefigures the future work of Jesus.

In Genesis chapter 22, following a three day journey, “Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place... of which God had told him... afar off” (22:1-3) – the specific place for this sacrifice was important.

“Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you” (22:5). This tells us Abraham expected God to raise Isaac from the dead (see Hebrews 11:17-19) – 2,000 years later, Jesus raised from the dead after he was sacrificed on these same mountains.

“So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son” (22:6) – Isaac carried the wood for his own sacrifice just as Jesus carried the wooden crossbeam of his cross.

“Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, ‘Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?’ And Abraham said, ‘My son, God will provide Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.’” John the Baptist tells us Jesus provided himself as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

When “they came to the place of which God had told him”, Abraham built an altar and would have slain Isaac his son BUT GOD STOPPED HIM. “Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham... offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son” (22:9-13). This male lamb, pictures Jesus who offered himself in our place as our sacrifice. It is by “the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19), that we are saved.

Then “Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, ‘In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided’” (22:14). In this very place, on the mountains of Moriah, Jesus offered himself as the final sacrifice for sin.

It is no coincidence that both stories happened in the “land of Moriah” – at Jerusalem. Moses wrote a story that prefigured the crucifixion of Jesus. The story of Abraham and Isaac is just one story in the “the Scarlet Thread” that eventually connects to Jesus.