



Does God Really Require Human Sacrifices? Contradictions Series

Genesis 22:1-2: (NASB) ¹...God tested Abraham, and said to him, Abraham! And he said, Here I am. ²He said, Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, 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.



The actions of God in the Bible are an easy target for criticism. It is so easy to look into this ancient book and pick out events that may not look sensible, and even make God look bad and wildly inconsistent. Examining these events carefully does reveal truth and harmony if we are willing to look for it. One such event is the account where God specifically tells Abraham to take his son, Isaac, and kill him as a sacrifice to Him. This sounds absurd! How can a God of love, compassion and justice just arbitrarily ask someone to murder their son? What possible good could ever come from such an action? And what about other accounts in the

Bible that seem to show God as minimizing the value of human life? These are hard questions; and the good news is the Bible has clear and legitimate answers!

[https:// christianquestions.com/ category/ series/ contradictions-series/](https://christianquestions.com/category/series/contradictions-series/)

Our title is thought-provoking. We have done many episodes about how being a disciple of Jesus means sacrificing our human will and desires to follow Jesus and do our heavenly Father's will. But that is not the type of human sacrifice we are talking about today.



The Canaanites and others worshipped false gods who “demanded” the sacrifice of live humans, even children. The Jewish Law made this idolatrous worship punishable by death in Leviticus 20:2. How is that any different from our God who seemingly required a live sacrifice of Abraham's son, Isaac? And, in turn, God required His own son Jesus as a live sacrifice!



We read about a dramatic event in the life of Abraham.

After having a miracle baby when he and his wife were in their 90s, God asked Abraham the unthinkable - to offer his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice:

Genesis 22:1-2: (NASB) ¹Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, Abraham! And he said, Here I am. ²He said, Take now your son, your only son,



whom you love, Isaac, 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.

There is much more to this command from God than what God (as some surmise) is saying, bring your son up onto the mountain and kill him. The text uses the phrase *offer him*. This word for *offer* is used over 800 times in the Old Testament. It shows a change of location and gives the sense of going or bringing something higher. When something was offered to God, it was being reverently presented and held up before God. This is saying that Abraham should take his son, Isaac, and *offer him* – meaning to reverently present him and hold him up before God. There is a sacrifice here as well, but first we need to establish this important detail.

Here are some examples of how this word is used:

Genesis 8:20: (KJV) *And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and **offered** <5927> burnt offerings on the altar.*

Genesis 13:1: (KJV) *And Abram **went up** <5927> (“up” is the same Hebrew word for “offer”) out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south.*

Offering on an altar and then “going up” out of the country shows this has to do with a change of location.

Offered: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #5927 *alah*; to ascend; arise up

God was essentially saying: “Abraham, the life of your son who was born out of impossibility (a miracle) is destined for My service. Offer him freely to Me.”

Genesis 22:3-5: (NASB) ³*So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. ⁴On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. ⁵Abraham said to his young men, *Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you.**



Abraham's instructions are powerful.

He calmly states to the young men with them that there is a sacred worship that he and Isaac would be engaged in, and they (Abraham and Isaac) would return when completed.

Let's stop here for a moment because this phrase – *we will...return to you* - is hotly debated. We are not told why Abraham says this.

Here are some of the suggestions that have been made:



He was lying so as not to arouse suspicion in Isaac about what was about to happen.



Some suggest the Hebrew means “may we return,” expressing a wish, or in the sense of “we shall return if God wills it.”



Abraham trusted that if Isaac was killed, God would raise him from the dead at some point, in order to fulfill God's promise to him that through the lineage of Isaac should all nations be blessed. In the next segment



we will discuss this promise - *through Isaac your descendants shall be named* - found in Genesis 21:12 and Romans 9:7.

Abraham fully expected both of them to return somehow by God providing a substitute sacrifice, which is exactly what happened.

Genesis 22:6-8: (NASB) ⁶Abraham 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 the two of them walked on together. ⁷Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, My father! And he said, Here I am, my son. And he said, Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering? ⁸Abraham said, God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son. So the two of them walked on together.

Abraham was clear - God will provide!

Abraham again shows quiet and unrelenting confidence in the Almighty God, even though it did not make sense to go all that way without the lamb.

It appears Abraham hides his true intentions from Isaac by saying *God will provide...the lamb*. If he had answered: “YOU are that sacrifice,” there could be a chance Isaac would have run away, scared and confused.

Abraham’s calm and clear confidence was in his understanding of God’s great power:

Genesis 22:9: (NASB) ⁹Then they came to the place of which God had told him...

It is a three-day walk to get from Beersheba where they lived (Genesis 21:31) to Mount Moriah, which is in Jerusalem. It is reasonable to assume they spent the time in profitable and uplifting discussion. We can imagine Abraham instructing his son about the faithfulness of God, the value God places on obedience, and the rewards that go with being righteous. This would have prepared Isaac mentally for trusting HIS father who was trusting THE Father.



(Source: Matthew Poole’s Commentary on the Holy Bible) It is therefore highly reasonable to think that Abraham, having in the whole journey prepared Isaac for such a work by general but pertinent discourses, did upon the mount particularly instruct him concerning the plain and peremptory command of God, the absolute necessity of complying with it, the glorious reward of his obedience, and the dismal consequences of his disobedience; the power and faithfulness of God either to prevent the fatal blow, or to restore his life lost with infinite advantage. Upon these, and such-like reasons, doubtless he readily laid himself down at his father’s feet, and yielded up himself to the Divine will.



Continuing:

Genesis 22:9: (NASB) *..and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.*

This is another point in the narrative that is highly scrutinized. People ask, since Abraham had to tie him to the altar, does this mean Isaac was not a willing sacrifice?

Abraham was roughly 120 years old at this point, although scholars are not in complete agreement. Isaac was a young man in his prime and could have easily overpowered his father. It is safe to say he willingly allowed himself to be bound.

Perhaps he allowed himself to be bound because human instinct of self-preservation would kick in if his faith was not as strong as Abraham's.

Genesis 22:10-12: (NASB) ¹⁰*Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.*

The stage is set. Abraham and Isaac are on the mountain by themselves; they left the other young men back. This is a private situation. Abraham explained to Isaac what has happened, and Isaac was seemingly



The Sacrifice of Isaac
 Francesco Guardi
 Italy, 18th century
 1712-1793

willing to lay there on the altar; otherwise, he would have struggled and run away. Abraham raises the knife – It is hard to believe he would do this!

There is no coincidence with God –let us see what happens:

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 stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you **fear** <3373> God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.*

Fear: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3373; *yare'* yaw-ray'; fearing; morally, reverent: —afraid, fear (-ful)

Abraham trusted God explicitly.

God's providence had always been evident to Abraham. We have a hard time identifying with the fact that Abraham walked where God had told him to for a very long time - some 50 or 60 years before this. In this specific instance, God's providence required him to express his faith in a more dramatic and committed way than ever before. Leaving his father's country is one thing - an act of faith for sure - but raising his hand to sacrifice his son of promise was a very different level of faith! This shows us the power of faith and of God's providence.





Think for a moment of the historical significance to ancient peoples hearing of this account of child sacrifice. False gods in the region had for centuries been demanding such sacrifices. To get to Mount Moriah, Abraham would have had to overlook the Valley of Gehenna where countless children had been horrifically murdered – burned alive - to the false god, Molech. Would Jehovah be just like those other gods?

No! He was merciful and did not require Isaac's life:

Genesis 22:13-14: (NASB) ¹³Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and **offered <5927>** him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. ¹⁴Abraham called the name of that place *The LORD Will Provide* (*Jehovah-jireh*), as it is said to this day, in the mount of the LORD it will be provided.



Remember earlier how Abraham assured Isaac that God would provide? He did and always does. This is one of the big lessons of this account.

Sometimes we must look up and around to see, notice, observe and follow God's providence. Abraham's immediate response was to offer the sacrifice, to reverently present before and up to God the provided ram lamb. His next action was to name the location in reverent appreciation of God's providence.

In the Old Testament, various compound names of Jehovah are found. Like *Jehovah-shalom* - God gives peace. *Jehovah-shammah* - God is there. *Jehovah-jireh* means God will provide. *God will provide* describes this place where God provided the ram for the sacrifice. These names serve as memorials to His name, in connection with some crisis in the lives of Abraham, Isaac and the nation of Israel. They commemorate the display of divine assistance so that later generations would know how God had helped them in their need. Not only did this experience strengthen Abraham's commitment to obey God, but he learned firsthand about God's ability to provide. This commemoration is for us to remember how God provides in our lives.

Eventually this exact location of *Jehovah-jireh* was where the Jewish temple stood in Jerusalem. It is the present-day Temple Mount where the al-Aqsa Mosque stands – that is the golden dome often shown in pictures of Jerusalem near the Western Wall.



Even though it can be hard to wrap our heads around this whole experience, Abraham's faith REALLY shines out!



How could Abraham have had such faith? How could he have been SO SURE that God would provide?

These are big questions, and we can only answer them by viewing both the immediate context of this event as well as the larger biblical context. Our initial question about whether God requires human sacrifices still hangs in the balance. As we find our answer in this particular event, we will also find the basis for a comprehensive biblical answer as well.

Let's review this account again and look at it in a more critical way. We will look at how this happened and what it teaches us in relation to the principles of God, His treatment of humanity and in regard to human sacrifices.

Abraham knew he HAD to follow God's leading as he had already been promised blessings:

Genesis 12:1-4: (NASB) *¹Now the LORD said to Abram, Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; ²and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; ³And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed. ⁴So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.*

Abraham was only 75 years old at the time of the promise. He was likely around 120 at the time he offered Isaac. There were many years in between. He had been given that promise, and with that promise he changed his life. This promise would be restated many times to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob and through prophecies as well. Following the promise was a core feature of Abraham's life.

Hebrews 11:17: (NASB) *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, **offered <4374>** up Isaac, and He who had received the promises was offering up His only begotten son...*

Offered: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #4374 *prosphero*; to bear towards, i.e., lead to, tender (especially to God), treat: —bring (to, unto), deal with, do, offer (unto, up), present unto, put to

When we looked at the word *offered* in the Old Testament Hebrew, it showed a change of location and gave the sense of going or bringing something higher. The New Testament continues that same thought. The Greek word means to bear towards, that is, to lead to - especially to God.

Abraham had been following God's leadings for 50 years at this point. This is what he naturally did. Abraham knew that promised blessing from God required focused acquiescence to His will.



- The first thing Abraham knew was that he would have to be in line with the promises.
- The second thing Abraham knew was that, without doubt, Isaac was the promised seed. Therefore, Isaac had to live.

**New Testament verification:**

Hebrews 11:18: (NASB) *It was he to whom it was said, In Isaac your descendants shall be called.*

Old Testament Account:

Genesis 21:5: (NASB) *Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.*

This had been another test of faith. God promised Sarah would bear a son. The fulfillment of that promise seemed to be delayed, but Abraham and Sarah needed to trust God more.

Sarah took matters into her own hands to make God's promise of a son happen. She gave Abraham her Egyptian concubine named Hagar in an effort to produce an heir. But once Hagar became pregnant, she and Sarah did not get along. Hagar's son was named Ishmael, and eventually Sarah herself gave birth to Isaac. This is one of the times God asks the rhetorical question - *Is anything too hard for the LORD?*

We pick up the narrative at a family party with lots of drama. Ishmael is a teenager and baby Isaac is around two years-old:

Genesis 21:9-13: (NASB) *⁹Now Sarah saw the son of Hagar...mocking (Isaac). ¹⁰Therefore she said to Abraham, Drive out this maid and her son, for the son of this maid shall not be an heir with my son Isaac. ¹¹The matter distressed Abraham greatly because of his son (Ishmael). ¹²But God said to Abraham, Do not be distressed because of the lad and your maid; whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her, for through Isaac your descendants shall be named. ¹³And of the son of the maid I will make a nation also, because he is your descendant.*

Hagar and Ishmael were being sent away because Sarah was upset. God tells Abraham (who was concerned for Ishmael, his first son) that it was okay – He would take care of this. Ishmael was Abraham's son, too, and God would make of Ishmael a great nation (the Arab nations today). God stated this had to be because Isaac was the promised seed.

If God would care enough about Hagar and Ishmael to make Ishmael a great nation, how much more would God care for Isaac, the promised seed, being brought to an altar of sacrifice?

Abraham had physical evidence of the power of God in his life. We often do not think about the fact that Abraham lived with the leadings of God. He saw God's plans for him unfold. This created an incredible basis of faith from which Abraham was working.

Abraham knew God would provide a lamb because God had requested a sacrifice.



But God provided a ram, not a lamb! Why?

DID YOU KNOW?



This could sound confusing. But we consulted with one of our CQ contributors, Mark, who is an animal science teacher, and he cleared up the matter. A ram is an adult male sheep. If it is under a year old it is called a "ram lamb." A ewe is a female sheep.



Hebrews 11:19: (NASB) *He (Abraham) considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a **type** <3850>.*

Type: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3850 *parabole*; a similitude ("parable"), i.e. (symbol.) fictitious narrative (of common life conveying a moral), apoth gm or adage: —comparison, figure, parable, proverb

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon defines *type* as: A placing of one thing by the side of another; juxtaposition. A comparison of one thing with another. An example by which a doctrine or precept is illustrated.



In Hebrews 11:17, Abraham knew he had been promised blessings.

In Hebrews 11:18, there is no doubt that Isaac is the promised seed from whom all of Abraham's descendants would come.

We are told Abraham's faith drove him to know that he would receive Isaac back as this picture (a **type) of something in the future:**

Hebrews 11:19: (NASB) *He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.*

Why would God make this drama happen way back at the beginning?
One reason was that it was a type, a picture of something bigger.

THREE BRIEF "TYPE" AND FULFILLMENT EXAMPLES:
Isaac is the example (the type) and Jesus is the fulfillment.



Isaac:

Genesis 17:18-19: (NASB) ¹⁸*And Abraham said to God, Oh that Ishmael might live before You! ¹⁹But God said, No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.*

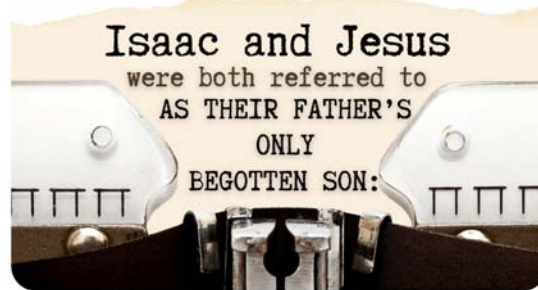
Through Isaac, the Messiah would be born.

Jesus:

Isaiah 7:14: (NASB) *Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call his name Immanuel.*

Both Isaac and Jesus were sons of promise – a promise of something to come which did not seem possible. Isaac was born to Sarah when she was 90 years old. Jesus was born to Mary who was a young virgin. Both seemed impossible, but both happened so we would learn what God was teaching us.

#2



Isaac:

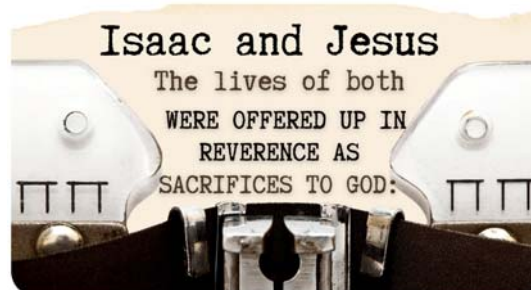
Hebrews 11:17: (NASB) *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son...*

Jesus:

John 3:16: (NASB) *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.*

This gives us unmistakable clarity in the comparison... *only begotten son of Abraham - only begotten son of God.* It is a clear, concise picture. This is why we have the drama on Mount Moriah – we see God explaining this to us long before it happened.

#3



Isaac:

Genesis 22:9-10: (NASB) *⁹Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.*

Jesus:

1 John 4:10: (NASB) *In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

We see the reverent sacrifice of Isaac, who willingly laid on the altar, and Jesus, who willingly offered up himself.

Here are additional comparisons and foreshadowing:

- Isaac carried the wood for his own sacrifice
- Jesus carried his own wooden cross
- Isaac had his hands secured, even though he was a willing sacrifice
- The hands of Jesus were securely nailed to the cross, even though he was a willing sacrifice





- Isaac's back was laid on the wood on the altar
- Jesus' back was on the wood of the cross

Most importantly, both showed that one life can be substituted for another:

- The ram was a substitute for Isaac
- Jesus was a substitute for Adam and all mankind benefits

It is hard for humanity to imagine what it was like for the Almighty God to give us His beloved son. It is much easier especially for parents to relate to this loving human father, Abraham, who waited nearly 100 years to have Isaac, and then to think of the pain of having to give him up. This gives us a relatable way to understand the value of Isaac and Jesus, and the unbelievable gift of restitution God provided us.



The CRITICAL difference: God NEVER intended for Abraham to slay his son, but He did intend for Abraham to show complete faithfulness to His will. Though NOT literally sacrificed, Isaac lay on the altar of sacrifice as a symbol of that which was to come, the voluntary sacrifice of Jesus.

While God tells Abraham: "Go sacrifice your son," what He really was saying to Abraham was: "Bring him before Me reverently." God was not going to let the actual knife-strike happen, but He needed to confirm Abraham's faithfulness.

This is still a difficult account to read. This was a specific test at a specific time to foreshadow Jesus. On its basic level, it confirmed Abraham's trust in God and God's ability and willingness to provide. Mentally ill people have killed people, saying they heard the voice of God telling them to do it. That is NOT at all what happened here.

God is faithful, and we can trust that, come what may, He will do what is best for our highest spiritual welfare if we are trying our best to live godly lives according to His will.

In fulfillment of this picture, Jesus gave his life of his own free will, not out of any coercion. It was a completely voluntary action:

John 10:17-18: (YLT) *¹⁷Because of this doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life, that again I may take it; ¹⁸no one doth take it from me, but I lay it down of myself; authority I have to lay it down, and authority I have again to take it; this command I received from my Father.*

Jesus fulfilled what Isaac pictured AND the actual shedding of blood sacrifice as well:

John 1:29: (NASB) *The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, Behold, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*

!





Clarifying Contradictions:

The account of Abraham preparing to sacrifice Isaac on the altar was for the purpose of proving Abraham's faithfulness and showing us the actual willing sacrifice of Jesus.

This sets a standard of both honoring the free will of the one being sacrificed **AND** of the sacrifice being offered having great value within God's plan.



Abraham, Isaac and Jesus were tested, found obedient and then followed through and were ultimately blessed. There is a test, there is faithfulness, providence, obedience and blessing.

This is a real lesson in the knowledge and foresight of God. His plans have been quietly revealed all throughout human history.

Abraham and Isaac are one thing, but what about handing innocent people over to someone for the purpose of being executed?

Our next view of the human sacrifice question is very different. Here we will encounter the actual killing of several individuals. As we delve into God's perspective regarding human sacrifices, we need to pay close attention to details, principles and the timeframe of the account in question. Only then will we be able to see the truth of the matter.

CONTRADICTION -
or needing a
clear explanation?



Does God require
human sacrifices?

What about King David and the Gibeonites?



PROBLEM:

King David delivered seven men to the Gibeonites so they could kill them. Isn't this an arbitrary sacrificing of innocent human lives?

2 Samuel 21:6: (NASB) *Let seven men from his sons be given to us, and we will hang them before the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, the chosen of the LORD. And the king said, I will give them.*

This is a clear sacrificing of some lives to appease others. What is this all about?



No matter how we look at this issue, it is a difficult experience to understand. Digesting the context will help our perspective.



God communicated to David the reasons the people were suffering from a famine:

2 Samuel 21:1: (NASB) *¹Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David sought the presence of the LORD. And the LORD said, It is for Saul and his bloody house, because he put the Gibeonites to death.*

There is no scriptural record of these actions by Saul which shows us how many things happened that were not recorded. The record of these actions here is enough to see the serious problem.

See the Bonus Material for more.

In looking at the context, we cannot just look at the scriptures immediately before and after –we have to go all the way back to Joshua 9, some 400 years earlier, when different nations in Canaan formed an alliance against Israel. However, as an act of deception, their Gibeonite neighbors cleverly convinced Joshua that they journeyed from a faraway land. They showed moldy bread, old wineskins and worn-out shoes and clothes. They wanted a peace treaty with Israel in order to survive. The Israelites agreed to a covenant with them, but never consulted God about it. When Joshua found out they were actually neighboring Canaanites, it was decided the covenant would stand but the Gibeonites would be their servants. This arrangement lasted peacefully for generations until at some point, King Saul broke the covenant and attacked the Gibeonites!



God required that the Israelites were faithful to the covenant they made, which is why the famine was sent. After three years, David finally asked the LORD why, and we find out it was because of what Saul and his household did to the Gibeonites. “You made the promise, but you didn’t keep it.” It is a serious offense to break a covenant!

2 Samuel 21:2-6: (NASB) *²So the king called the Gibeonites and spoke to them (now the Gibeonites were not of the sons of Israel but of the remnant of the Amorites, and the sons of Israel made a covenant with them, but Saul had sought to kill them in his zeal for the sons of Israel and Judah).*

Saul and his "house" sought to kill the Gibeonites despite the fact that they were a peaceful people working as servants for Israel.

This covenant Joshua made with these people had been in place about 400 years before Saul broke it:

³Thus David said to the Gibeonites, What should I do for you? And how can I make atonement that you may bless the inheritance of the LORD?⁴Then the Gibeonites said to him, We have no concern of silver or gold with Saul or his house, nor is it for us to put any man to death in Israel. And he said, I will do for you whatever you say.

The Gibeonites did not want enrichment (more silver or gold); they simply sought justice for Saul’s massacre of their people:

⁵So they said to the king, The man who consumed us and who planned to exterminate us from remaining within any border of Israel, ⁶let seven men from his sons be given to us, and we will hang them before the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, the chosen of the LORD. And the king said, I will give them.



Here is what ended up happening:

2 Samuel 21:9: (NASB) *Then he gave them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them in the mountain before the LORD, so that the seven of them fell together; and they were put to death...*

Why would David comply?

First, the Law said *eye for eye, tooth for tooth, life for life*.

Deuteronomy 19:11-13: (NASB) *¹¹But if there is a man who hates his neighbor and lies in wait for him and rises up against him and strikes him so that he dies, and he flees to one of these cities, ¹²then the elders of his city shall send and take him from there and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. ¹³You shall not pity him, but you shall purge the blood of the innocent from Israel, that it may go well with you.*

In the Old Testament, if you took the life of someone, your life was required.

Second, God had made it clear that unrepented sins would be paid for by following generations:

Numbers 14:18: (NASB) *The LORD is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generations.*

If you are curious to learn more about how generational curses worked in the Old Testament – and what relationship they have to us today - listen to Episode 1196 at ChristianQuestions.com or the ChristianQuestions app.



Curses in family bloodlines and the bigger context of Old Testament curses

Earlier we asked: Isn't this an arbitrary sacrificing of innocent human lives? But when we look deeper, they probably were not all that innocent, as it is likely that the seven men handed over were guilty in helping Saul kill the Gibeonites. These were two of Saul's sons (by his concubine, Rizpah) and five grandsons (by his daughter Merab). In 2 Samuel 21:1, we read how the LORD said this was for *Saul AND his bloody house*.

There is an important side question, though. David made an oath to Saul back in 1 Samuel 24:16-22. In verse 21 (NLT), Saul says - *Now swear to me by the Lord that when that happens you will not kill my family and destroy my line of descendants!* David agreed. **Did he break that oath to Saul when he handed over the seven members of Saul's family to be put to death?**

No. In 2 Samuel 21:7-9, David spared Saul's grandson, the son of Jonathan. Years earlier, David had made yet another oath to Jonathan to watch over his son. David kept that promise. He never promised to preserve all of Saul's children - just the line of Saul. The line was preserved through Saul's grandson.

Saul committed a heinous sin by going after these people who were peaceful for hundreds of years. He was not godly and needed to pay for his sins. This was the carrying out of justice with the Old Testament principles intact.



The entire purpose for Jesus was to right the wrongs of sin and to lift all of humanity up from the sad and painful hardship of trying to find justice and mercy in an unjust world:

Hebrews 10:9-12: (NASB) ⁹*Then he said, Behold, I have come to do your will. He takes away the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ¹¹Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; ¹²but he, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God...*

Old Testament sacrifices were offered again and again, but they could only provide borrowed time. They could only take away sin temporarily. The willing sacrifice of Jesus was one time for all. *He sat down at the right hand of God.* Once Isaac and Abraham came down from Mount Moriah and went back home, Isaac would have sat at the right hand of Abraham. Abraham is a picture of God and Isaac a picture of Jesus.

The sacrifice of Jesus opens the door of acceptable self-sacrifice for his followers.

They will be ministers of worldwide reconciliation by virtue of their faithfully sacrificed lives:

Romans 12:1-2: (NASB) ¹*Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. ²And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

If we profess to be a Christian, the question is what are we sacrificing; what are we giving up for the sake of the gospel? Are we laying our own will on the altar of sacrifice to please our heavenly Father?



Clarifying Contradictions:

Combining the account of David and the Gibeonites

with the sacrificing of Isaac, we can clearly see that God's will **NEVER** supports an arbitrary sacrificing of any human life at any time for any reason.

On the contrary, His will was for strict justice in the Old Testament and mercy through the fulfillment of justice in the New Testament.

All lives lost will be restored because of Jesus!



God has a master plan for reconciliation for all.

Life, death and human sacrifice must be understood in the context of all scripture and eternity to truly grasp God's will and way.



What about making an oath, swearing that something is true? Are we really supposed to avoid doing this?

This supposed contradiction can be a tricky one. Once again, we will have to look at the big picture. Jesus makes a plain and irrefutable statement about oaths, but we need to be careful to properly understand exactly what he meant. This can only be done by observing the context of his words and his actions and of the apostles.



Several times in Scripture, something is sworn to be true by God Himself. Here is one example:

Genesis 22:15-17: (NASB) ¹⁵Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, ¹⁶and said, By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore...

God swore by Himself to confirm His covenant with Abraham. It cannot get any higher than that!



PROBLEM: When it comes to humanity, are we supposed to do what God does or not?

Old Testament Law:

Numbers 30:2: (NASB) *If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or takes an oath to bind himself with a binding obligation, he shall not violate his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.*

If you vow to the LORD or take an oath, do what you said you would do!

But Jesus said:

Matthew 5:34-36: (NASB) ³⁴But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING. ³⁶Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.



Why does Jesus seemingly forbid us from making an oath?



This issue has many parts. First, let's grasp the context of what Jesus was saying. His words leading up to this statement on oaths were lifting his followers to a higher and far more sober way of living the details of their lives. Each and every example Jesus gave in this context lifts and enhances the moral law of the Old Testament.

In the middle of the Sermon on the Mount, if we carefully examine what Jesus says, we will see this lifting or enhancing repeated again and again:

Matthew 5:21-22: (NASB) ²¹You have heard that the ancients were told, You shall not commit murder...²²But I say to you...

Jesus lifted the standard against murder higher.

“ But I say to you...”

Matthew 5:27-28: (NASB) ²⁷You have heard that it was said, You shall not commit adultery; ²⁸but I say to you...

Again, he is lifting the standard against adultery higher.

Matthew 5:31-32: (NASB) ³¹It was said, Whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce; ³²but I say to you...

The standard is raised again, this time against divorce.

The standard has been raised three times in this set of scriptures about very serious things.

Next is Jesus' teaching on oaths that we are considering right now.

Right after that he goes back to the process of raising the standard:

Matthew 5:38-39: (NASB) ³⁸You have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. ³⁹But I say to you...

Jesus lifts the standard higher.

Matthew 5:43-44: (NASB) ⁴³You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. ⁴⁴But I say to you...

Jesus was continually lifting the standard higher.

If we say Jesus was condemning any and all oaths, we would be interpreting this piece of his teaching as out of harmony with the rest of his teachings. Jesus was not removing or repealing the moral Law; he was enhancing and deepening it.

What did he mean? Now, let's focus on the teaching on oaths:

Matthew 5:33-37: (NASB) ³³Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, You shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your **vows** to the LORD. ³⁴But I say to you, Make no **oath** **<3660>** at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the great king. ³⁶Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷But let your statement be, **Yes** **<3483>**, **yes** **<3483>** or No, no; anything beyond these is of evil (many translations say “evil one” - meaning Satan).

Yes here confirms a strong affirmation. It is definitive – not “Eh, if I feel like it,” which could change tomorrow.



Vows: Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: that which has been pledged or promised with an oath

Oath: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3660; *omnuo*; swear

1) to swear 2) to affirm, promise, threaten, with an oath 3) in swearing to call a person or thing as witness, to invoke, swear by

Yes: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3483; *nai nahee*; a primary particle of strong affirmation; yes: —even so, surely, truth, verily, yea, yes

Greek English Lexicon: yea, verily, truly, assuredly, even so

The Pharisees were being dishonest and hypocritical. Jewish tradition said that if you made oaths in the name of God, they were binding, but if it did not specifically contain God's name, it was not binding. This gave them a legalistic loophole to make promises they did not want or intend to keep. If things changed, they could say they made the oath by swearing by their head, but not by their heart; therefore, it is void. This was a conditional approach to oaths.

But Jesus was saying that if they were making an oath, it should be a God-driven oath. If they swore by heaven, earth or Jerusalem, they were taking away the highest level of promise. All belong to God so you cannot swear by anything and omit God. That is why he finishes by saying, *Let your statement be Yes, yes or No, no*. We are responsible to fulfill every oath we make.

You shall not make an oath by your head - we cannot change nature, so do not swear an oath on something we have no control over. If we make an oath by promising before God, we are connecting our solemn and reverent promise with our Creator. In other words, be so truthful in all you say that it will be unnecessary to swear to its truthfulness, or to use any kind of especially forceful language to prove your sincerity —that you are neither overstating nor understating the truth.

Let's get practical. We have all heard people say:



"I swear to God" or "Honest to God"

"I swear on my mother's grave" or "I swear on a stack of Bibles"

"Cross my heart"

We might use these superlatives on trivial occasions to make it look like our promise is somehow more binding. Jesus is saying: "Do not swear by anything — just say what you mean, and mean what you say." God hates perjury - literally a *false oath* according to Zechariah 8:17.

Do not let your words come across less than your actions. Our word should be enough. We must work to get to that point by living with great spiritual integrity as a representative of Jesus Christ. Jesus is saying to put away all pretensions and false promises —be who you say you are, a follower of Jesus.

(Source: Ellicott's Bible Commentary: "In an ideal Christian society, no oaths would be needed, for every word would be spoken as by those who knew that the Eternal Judge was hearing them.")

If we are not careful in our ordinary statements, we are less likely to be reverent toward God and holy things.



Jesus elevates the teaching by taking away the carelessness and deception in making grand and unnecessary proclamations. This is real life, not acting. It involves integrity and following the examples of Jesus.

We will suggest that the phrase, *Make no oath at all, either by heaven..., or by earth..., or by Jerusalem...* is all one thought. He is not saying: “Make no oath ever.” Jesus is saying do not make oaths by all these things because they are frivolous. All the frivolity behind the making of half-hearted promises must absolutely stop. Remember Matthew 5 is written to his truest followers. They (we) are not to do this. Notice Jesus does not say make no oaths by invoking God Himself. He does not put this away because that type of oath is a promise that is solemn. The sacredness of God Himself is left out of this conversation for this reason.

Examples of appropriate oaths:



Jesus himself essentially swore by God’s name to be truthful in answering a question:

Matthew 26:63-64: (NASB) ⁶³*But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to him, I adjure (to exact an oath) you by the living God, that you tell us whether you are the Christ, the son of God.* ⁶⁴*Jesus said to him, You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.*

When Jesus was on trial, he took an oath because it was too solemn not to answer. Some Christians use the Matthew 5 scriptures to say they can never take an oath in a formal setting of a courtroom, as in “I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.” But Jesus was not teaching us to never take an oath.

Jesus’ example is plain. He was essentially silent before his accusers as the prophecy said. Yet, when he spoke, this is what he said. Why? Because the high priest was exacting an oath on him *by the living God*. Jesus respectfully answered because he was a man of deep and powerful integrity.

Several times the Apostle Paul also brought God’s authority into his own writings.

Two examples:

2 Corinthians 1:23: (NASB) *But I call God as witness to my soul, that to spare you I did not come again to Corinth.*



Isn’t this basically saying, “As God is my witness”, or “I swear to God...” or “honest to God”? Did we not just say the Christian should not swear by anything? What is the difference?

Why do we see Paul doing this frequently? He was preaching to the Gentiles. They did not yet have a deep connection to God – nor did they have the sense of ancestry throughout all generations that the Jewish brethren had with God. They came from paganism. Paul, when talking to the Gentiles, says he is calling on God Almighty to witness his words. This is the God they had just learned about and whose son died for their sins. Paul was helping these new Christians to lift themselves up in reverence.



Galatians 1:19-20: (NASB) ¹⁹*But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother.* ²⁰*(Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying).*



Apostle Paul was being accused of not being qualified to be an apostle; this was a serious situation. He gave the details of his conversion to show that his message came directly from God, so his teaching could be trusted. This was a serious invocation of the heavenly Father.

In Acts 23:12-13, more than forty Jews formed a conspiracy (plot) and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. We wonder if they followed through and died of starvation?

When the Apostle Paul brings God's name in, it is serious, truthful, powerful and necessary. No oath should be taken lightly; we need to leave off the theatrics and be a person of our Christian worth.

Clarifying Contradictions:

Making an oath, swearing to a promise or a statement by calling on something higher than us is serious business.

Jesus taught us to be serious enough with our commitments so that we can be seen as reliable based on our own words but did not necessarily tell us that an oath made with God as our witness is wrong.



Remember we read at the end of the last segment: "We cannot take back what we promised to God." The greatest oath we can make as Christians is our vow of consecration – a word we use to mean our thorough, unreserved dedication to do God's will. It cannot be taken back.

Romans 12:1-2: (NASB) ¹*Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.* ²*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

We must stand above the rest as Jesus did. In all these situations we have an incredible, powerful example in making sure that our word is sound, clear and reliable to all of those around us.

Think about the contradictions we talked about in this episode. When we look at the aspect of sacrifice in context, it gives us the perspective to understand the lesson the Lord is giving us. Even with David and the Gibeonites, justice was fulfilled.

Regarding oaths, Jesus is elevating us to a higher standard.



**So, does God really require human sacrifices?
For Jonathan, Rick, Julie and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!**

All quoted scriptures are from the 1995 version of NASB unless otherwise indicated.



Join us next week for our podcast on September 19, 2022

Ep. 1247: Does God Ever Tempt Us?
Contradictions Series

Bonus Material and Study Questions

Right after Abraham offered up the ram to God, the angel of the LORD again spoke to him:

Genesis 22:15-19: (NASB) ¹⁵*Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, ¹⁶and said, By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. ¹⁸In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice. ¹⁹So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham lived at Beersheba.*

Old Testament word for offer from the Abraham account:

Offer: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #5927 *alah*; to ascend, intransitively (be high) or actively (mount); used in a great variety of senses, primary and secondary, literal and figurative (as follow): — arise (up), (cause to) ascend up, at once, break [the day] (up), bring (up), (cause to) burn, carry up, cast up, + shew, climb (up), (cause to, make to) come (up), cut off, dawn, depart, exalt, excel, fall, fetch up, get up, (make to) go (away, up); grow (over) increase, lay, leap, levy, lift (self) up, light, [make] up, X mention, mount up, offer, make to pay, + perfect, prefer, put (on), raise, recover, restore, (make to) rise (up), scale, set (up), shoot forth (up), (begin to) spring (up), stir up, take away (up), work

The account of Joshua and the Gibeonites:

Joshua 9:1-27: (NASB) ¹*Now it came about when all the kings who were beyond the Jordan, in the hill country and in the lowland and on all the coast of the Great Sea toward Lebanon, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, heard of it, ²that they gathered themselves together with one accord to fight with Joshua and with Israel. ³When the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and to Ai, ⁴they also acted craftily and set out as envoys, and took worn-out sacks on their donkeys, and wineskins worn-out and torn and mended, ⁵and worn-out and patched sandals on their feet, and worn-out clothes on themselves; and all the bread of their provision was dry and had become crumbled. ⁶They went to Joshua to the camp at Gilgal and said to him and to the men of Israel, We have come from a far country; now therefore, make a covenant with us. ⁷The men of Israel said to the Hivites, Perhaps you are living within our land; how then shall we make a covenant with*



you?⁸But they said to Joshua, We are your servants. Then Joshua said to them, Who are you and where do you come from?⁹They said to him, Your servants have come from a very far country because of the fame of the LORD your God; for we have heard the report of Him and all that He did in Egypt, ¹⁰and all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Shon king of Heshbon and to Og king of Bashan who was at Ashtaroth. ¹¹So our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spoke to us, saying, Take provisions in your hand for the journey, and go to meet them and say to them, We are your servants; now then, make a covenant with us. ¹²This our bread was warm when we took it for our provisions out of our houses on the day that we left to come to you; but now behold, it is dry and has become crumbled. ¹³These wineskins which we filled were new, and behold, they are torn; and these our clothes and our sandals are worn out because of the very long journey. ¹⁴So the men of Israel took some of their provisions, and did not ask for the counsel of the LORD. ¹⁵Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant with them, to let them live; and the leaders of the congregation swore an oath to them. ¹⁶It came about at the end of three days after they had made a covenant with them, that they heard that they were neighbors and that they were living within their land. ¹⁷Then the sons of Israel set out and came to their cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon and Chephirah and Beeroth and Kiriath-jearim. ¹⁸The sons of Israel did not strike them because the leaders of the congregation had sworn to them by the LORD the God of Israel. And the whole congregation grumbled against the leaders. ¹⁹But all the leaders said to the whole congregation, We have sworn to them by the LORD, the God of Israel, and now we cannot touch them. ²⁰This we will do to them, even let them live, so that wrath will not be upon us for the oath which we swore to them. ²¹The leaders said to them, Let them live. So they became hewers of wood and drawers of water for the whole congregation, just as the leaders had spoken to them. ²²Then Joshua called for them and spoke to them, saying, Why have you deceived us, saying, We are very far from you, when you are living within our land?²³Now therefore, you are cursed, and you shall never cease being slaves, both hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God. ²⁴So they answered Joshua and said, Because it was certainly told your servants that the LORD your God had commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land before you; therefore we feared greatly for our lives because of you, and have done this thing. ²⁵Now behold, we are in your hands; do as it seems good and right in your sight to do to us. ²⁶Thus he did to them, and delivered them from the hands of the sons of Israel, and they did not kill them. ²⁷But Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation and for the altar of the LORD, to this day, in the place which He would choose.

Bible Commentary notes on the Joshua/ Gibeonite/ King Saul/ King David accounts:

(Source: Arthur W. Pink Bible Commentary) Now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; and the children of Israel had sworn unto them" (v. 2). The allusion is to what is found in Joshua 9. It will be remembered that after Joshua had overthrown Jericho and Ai the inhabitants of Gibeon were afraid, and resorted to dishonest strategy. They succeeded in deceiving Joshua. After telling a plausible tale, the Gibeonites offered to become the servants of Israel. And we are told, "And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation swore unto them". (Joshua 9:15) A little later, Israel learned that they had been deceived, that instead of the Gibeonites being travelers from a far country (as they had affirmed) they were really Canaanites. The sequel is quite striking and contains a lesson which governmental leaders would do well to take to heart today.

Three days later, as they continued their advance, the Israelites reached the cities of the Gibeonites, and we are told, "And the children of Israel smote them not, because the princes of the congregation had sworn unto them by the Lord God of Israel" (v. 18). The heads of the nation respected the solemn treaty into which they had entered with the Gibeonites. Then they were put to a more severe test: "And all the congregation murmured against the princes" (v. 18). The common people urged their leaders to regard that treaty as a scrap of paper — human nature was just the same then as it is now: unprincipled, blind to its own highest interests, utterly selfish, indifferent to the divine approval. But in the merciful providence of



God, Israel at that time was favored with conscientious leaders, who refused to yield to the popular clamor and do that which they knew was wrong.

"But all the princes said unto all the congregation, We have sworn unto them by the Lord God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them. This we will do to them; we will even let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we sware unto them" (vv. 19, 20). What mercy it is when the responsible heads of the nation are God-fearing men, whose word is their bond, who cannot be induced to forsake the paths of righteousness. And, my reader, how we need to pray (as we are commanded to do: 1 Ti 2:1,2) for all in authority over us, that God will make them honest, just, truthful, and that He will keep them steadfast in the performance of duty. Their position is no easy one: they are in need of divine grace, and prayer is the appointed channel through which supplies of grace are communicated—to the ministers of state as truly as to the ministers of the Gospel. Then instead of criticizing and condemning them, let us hold up their hands by daily supplication for them.

Joshua confirmed the stand taken by the "princes"—the heads of the tribes. Calling the Gibeonites unto him, he asked why they had beguiled him. Whereupon they confessed it was out of fear for their very lives that they had resorted to the imposture; and then cast themselves upon his mercy and fidelity. "And so did he unto them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, that they slew them not. And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the Lord, even unto this day" (vv. 26, 27). From that time onwards, the Gibeonites remained in Israel's midst, acting as their servants—a peaceful and useful people, as Ne 3:7 and other passages intimate.

"And Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah." (2 Samuel 21:2) In utter disregard for the solemn treaty which guaranteed their security, Saul determined to exterminate these Gibeonites; but this was done not out of zeal for the Lord, but "in his zeal to the children of Israel." How perverse human nature is! God had given Saul no commission to slay the Gibeonites, but He had commanded him to destroy the Philistines and Amalekites; but this he left undone. Ah, the extirpation of the Philistines was a difficult and dangerous task, for they were a well-armed and powerful people, fully prepared to resist, whereas the Gibeonites were an easy prey. And is there not much fleshly zeal being displayed in corrupt Christendom today?—thousands engaged in work to which God has never called them, whilst neglecting the great task He has assigned them. What numbers of the rank and file of professing Christians are now busy in seeking to "win souls to Christ," while neglecting the mortifying of their fleshly and worldly lusts—ah, the former is far easier than the latter.

Saul, then, broke public faith with the Gibeonites, for the solemn covenant entered into with them by Joshua assured their preservation. This is clear from verse 5, for while verse 2 says only that he "sought to slay them," here the Gibeonites referred to him as "the man that consumed us, and that devised against us, that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel," which is an amplification of the Lord's words, "It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites" (v. 1). This brought down heavy guilt upon the nation, which had not been expiated by the punishment of the guilty. The three years' famine which now came upon the land was proof of this. "It pleased God in this manner, and so long after, to proceed against the nation for it: to show His abhorrence against such crimes; to teach rulers to keep at a distance from similar offences themselves, and to punish them in others; and to intimate the chief punishment of sin is after the death of the offenders" (Thomas Scott).

The fact that God waited so many years before He publicly evidenced His displeasure against Israel for this heinous transgression, manifested His long sufferance, granting them a lengthy space for repentance. But they repented not, and now He made them to realize that He had neither overlooked nor forgotten their crime. Learn then, my reader, that the passage of time does not remove or lessen the guilt of sin. Let us also learn what a solemn thing it is for a strong nation to go back upon its pledged word when they have promised protection to a weak people.



Here are a few other scriptures in which oaths appear:

Genesis 21:22-24: (NASB) ²²Now it came about at that time that Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham, saying, God is with you in all that you do; ²³now therefore, swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me or with my offspring or with my posterity, but according to the kindness that I have shown to you, you shall show to me and to the land in which you have sojourned. ²⁴Abraham said, I swear it.

James 5:12: (NASB) But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment.

Hebrews 6:13-18: (NASB) ¹³For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, ¹⁴saying, I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply you. ¹⁵And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise. ¹⁶For men swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute. ¹⁷In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, ¹⁸so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.

Other examples of the Apostle Paul and calling upon God as witness to his writings and actions:

Romans 1:9-10: (NASB) ⁹For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you, ¹⁰always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you.

Philippians 1:8: (NASB) For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.

1 Corinthians 15:31: (NASB) I **affirm** <3513>, brethren, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

Affirm: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3513 né; a particle of attestation (accompanied by the object invoked or appealed to in confirmation); as sure as: —
I protest by 1) by 1a) used in the affirmations of oaths

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SHOW NOTES

1. Were there any ancient peoples who practiced the sacrifice of live humans, including children? Did the Israelites also practice this? (See Leviticus 20:2)
2. What were the special circumstances of Isaac's birth? What did God ask Abraham to do with Isaac? What does the word "offer" mean – how is it used? What do you think Abraham meant when he told the young men he left behind that he and Isaac would return? (See Genesis 22:1-5)
3. What did Abraham tell Isaac about the lamb for the burnt offering? What was Abraham's confident belief about God? What is reasonable to assume Abraham and Isaac discussed on the three-day walk from Beersheba to Mount Mariah? (Genesis 21:31, 22:4-9, Matthew Poole Commentary)
4. How old was Isaac at this time? Could he have fought back against Abraham? Why do you think he was bound on the altar? How would Abraham have felt when he and Isaac walked past the Valley of Gehenna on the way to Mount Moriah? (See Genesis 22:10-14)
5. What were Abraham's actions after God provided the ram lamb in the thicket? What was the promise given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? How did this promise strengthen Abraham? Explain the relationship between Jesus and Isaac in the "type and fulfillment" examples in CQ Rewind. (See Genesis 12:1-4, 17:18-19, 21:9-13, 22:9-14, Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23, John 3:16, Hebrews 11:17-19, 1 John 4:10)
6. What was the purpose of this account of Abraham and Isaac? (See John 1:29, 10:17-18)
7. Why was a covenant formed between Joshua and the Gibeonites? How long did this covenant last? What caused the three-year famine? What did the Gibeonites demand to make Saul's sin right? Did they want wealth? (See Joshua 9:1-27, 2 Samuel 21:1-9, Bonus Material)
8. Why would David comply with their demand? Did David break the oath he gave to Saul to not destroy Saul's line of descendants? (See Deuteronomy 19:11-13, Numbers 14:18, 1 Samuel 24:16-22, 2 Samuel 21:1-9)
9. How was Jesus' sacrifice "better" than the sacrifices of the Old Testament priests? What opportunity does Jesus' sacrifice open up for us? (See Hebrews 10:9-12, Romans 12:1-2)
10. Were oaths forbidden in the Old Testament Law? What is the purpose of the Sermon on the Mount? How does this purpose inform us on oaths in Matthew 5:33-37? Who swore oaths in the New Testament? What is our take-away on our responsibility with oaths? (See Numbers 30:2, Matthew 5:21-44, 26:63-64, 2 Corinthians 1:23, Galatians 1:19-20)