

## 27. CAN JESUS' DEATH ON THE CROSS BE CALLED A SACRIFICE?

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1. **Sharp Faith:** talks on 'soteriology' (how are we saved):
  - 1.1. "Why is blood so important in Scripture?" (January 21)
  - 1.2. "Did Jesus die to expiate our sins?" (January 28)
  - 1.3. "What is the real meaning of sacrifices in Scripture?" (February 4)
  - 1.4. **"Can Jesus's death on the cross be called a 'sacrifice'?" (March 3)**
  - 1.5. "Why did Jesus die on a cross?" (March 17)

### Jesus and the sacrificial institutions<sup>1</sup>

2. Jesus did not repudiate sacrificial institutions:
  - 2.1. He tells the healed lepers that ritual prescriptions should be fulfilled  
Mk 1:44 Jesus said to the leper "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to them."
  - 2.2. He enjoins to forgive to those who are presenting gift at the altar  
Mt 5:23f So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.
  - 2.3. He gives instructions for the preparation of the paschal meal  
Lk 22:4-23 7Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. 8So Jesus<sup>a</sup> sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it." 9They said to him, "Where will you have us prepare it?" 10He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters 11and tell the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' 12And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there." 13And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.
3. Yet there are several instances though in which he takes a distance from sacrificial institutions:
  - 3.1. It was obvious to everyone that Jesus was not a Jewish priest. No evangelical texts attest to Christ's participation in the sacrificial liturgy of the temple.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Sabourin L. « Sacrifice », dans Supplément au dictionnaire de la Bible, tome 10, 1985 et Vanhoye A. *Prêtres anciens, prêtre nouveau selon le Nouveau Testament*, Seuil, Paris 1980, 65-76. 1

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- 3.2. His activity had nothing sacerdotal in the ancient sense of the word, but rather placed him in the line of the prophets. Messianic hopes did not take on a priestly color, but were rather oriented in the direction of royal messianism.
- 3.3. Jesus was not against the priests but was critical of a ritual understanding of religion and especially of the rules of external 'purity'.
- 3.4. By driving out of the Temple the animal sellers Jesus was confronting the organization of the sacrificial cult. John specifies that "Jesus drove the sheep and the oxen out of the Temple" (Jn 2:15-17), that is the animals that were going to be offered in sacrifice.
- 3.5. By predicting the destruction of the Temple he was affirming that the sacrificial institution would become obsolete. This is also implied by the statement: "Something greater than the temple here" (Mt 12:6)
- 3.6. The Greek word *thusia* (sacrifice) occurs very sporadically in the Gospels:
  - i. Mt 9:13 and 12:7 "Mercy I desire and not **sacrifice**" – which is a quotation of Hos 6:6: "For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings". Here Jesus does not wish to condemn the sacrificial institutions, but to affirm the primacy of mercy over ritual obligations, of charity towards all over religious conformity.
  - ii. Same idea in the scribe's answer to Jesus:

Mark 12 28And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" 29Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' 31The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." 32And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. 33And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."
- 3.7. As for Jesus' death it had had many features that ruled out a sacrificial interpretation:
  - i. It took place outside the city.
  - ii. It was not accompanied by liturgical prayers.
  - iii. It was a legal punishment, the execution of a condemned person in infamy. Far from uniting with God and attracting his blessings it constituted a curse.

### The sacrificial interpretation of the death of Jesus

- 4. How did the first Christians come to attribute a sacrificial interpretation to Jesus' death?
  - 4.1. Jesus himself, during the Last Supper, gives a sacrificial meaning to his death - he refers to the covenant sacrifice by speaking of his blood as the 'blood of the new and eternal covenant'

Mt 26:28 For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

- 4.2. He establishes a link between the gift of his life and the suffering Servant of Isaiah, whose death is presented as an atoning sacrifice.
- 4.3. His passion took place during the Passover feast
  - i. at the same time as the immolation of the Paschal lamb (in John's Gospel)
  - ii. The Last Supper is celebrated in an Easter context.
  - iii. A reference can be detected to the sacrifice (*aqedah*, 'ligature') of Isaac – which goes beyond the ritual sacrifices.
- 4.4. Other New Testament writings explicitly link his death to the sacrifice for sins:
 

Rom 8:1-4 <sup>1</sup>There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup>For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup>For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin,<sup>e</sup> he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup>in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit

2 Cor 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Rom 3:22-25 For there is no distinction: <sup>23</sup>for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup>and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup>whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.

1 Jn 2:1f <sup>1</sup>My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. <sup>2</sup>He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

1 Jn 4:10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins
- 4.5. Cf. the whole Epistle to the Hebrews especially
 

Hb 9:11-14 <sup>11</sup>But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) <sup>12</sup>he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. <sup>13</sup>For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, <sup>14</sup>how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

## Identification of Jesus with the Passover lamb

- 5. John's Gospel implies the identification of Jesus with the Passover lamb, just as, in contemporary Jewish tradition the lamb was identified with Isaac:
  - i. Jesus is the real Isaac.

- 5.2. In John's gospel, this designation of Jesus as the Passover lamb is placed at the beginning and at the end of the gospel to include the entire public life of Jesus under the sign of the sacrificed Passover lamb:

- i. John the Baptist refers to Jesus as "the lamb who takes away the sin of the world" [Jn 1: 29] as the Targum spoke of Isaac: "the lamb prepared before God for the burnt offering", which has impetration value and removes sin.
- ii. Jesus was put to death when the Passover lamb was being slain

Jn 19:12-26 and 31 <sup>12</sup>From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar." <sup>13</sup>So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic Gabbatha. <sup>14</sup>Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" <sup>15</sup>They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." <sup>16</sup>So he delivered him over to them to be crucified. [...] <sup>31</sup>Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away.

- 5.3. The crucifixion is the fulfillment of a prophecy relating to the true Passover lamb:

Ex 12:46 It shall be eaten in one house, and you shall not bring any piece of meat out of that house. You won't break any bones.

Num 9:12 Nothing shall be left of it in the morning, neither shall they break any bone. It is according to the whole ritual of Passover that they will celebrate it.

Psa 34:7 A poor man has cried out, and Yahweh hears, and from all his troubles he saves him. 8 He encamps, the angel of Yahweh, around his faithful ones, and frees them. [...] 20 Woe upon woe to the righteous, but Yahweh delivers him from all; 21 Yahweh keeps all his bones; not one will be broken.

John 19:32 So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and then of the other who was crucified with him. 33 When they came to Jesus, when they saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.

6. Other New Testament passages show that the early Church viewed Jesus as the true Passover Lamb:

1Co 5:7 Purify yourselves from the old leaven to be a new dough, since you are unleavened. For our Passover, Christ, has been sacrificed.

1Pt 1:18 Know that you have not been set free by anything corruptible, silver or gold, from the vain conduct inherited from your fathers, 19 but by precious blood, as of a lamb without reproach and without blemish. Christ, 20 discerned before the foundation of the world and manifested in the last times for your sake.

Rev 5:9 You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain and you redeemed for God, with your blood, men of every race, language, people and nation. 12 Worthy is the slain Lamb to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory and praise.

7. It is true that the immolation of the Passover lamb originally had only a protective purpose: to 'preserve' the Hebrews from the scourges inflicted on the Egyptians. But very early on Jewish tradition interpreted as a real sacrifice:

Ex 12:27 you shall say to them, "This is the Passover sacrifice for Yahweh who passed beyond the houses of the Israelites into Egypt, when he was smiting Egypt, but spared our houses."

Ex 34:25 25 You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread, nor shall the sacrifice of the Passover be kept until the next day.

8. This is confirmed by the New Testament texts which speak of sacrificing the Passover:

Mk 14:12 On the first day of Azymes, when the Passover was being sacrificed, his disciples said to him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

## Isaac and Jesus

9. With the rediscovery of the Targums<sup>2</sup> we know better the importance that Judaism of the time of Jesus attached to the sacrifice of Isaac in the form of his *aqedah* ('ligature'): according to the Targum on Gen 22, Isaac would have offered his life in obedience to the will of God communicated to his father Abraham. Although he was not in fact immolated, he freely agreed to be, and Abraham bound him. Here are the aspects [see text from Flavius Joseph in the *appendix*]:

- 9.1. Isaac's sacrifice would have taken place on the very site of the future Temple of Jerusalem.
- 9.2. At the moment of the sacrifice Isaac asked Abraham to bind him [hence *aqedah*, 'binding'] for fear that the offering would be rendered invalid. Had Isaac struggled and injured himself he would have become an invalid victim. He wanted to meet all the ritual prescriptions of the sacrifice. A ligature of the sacrificial lamb does not appear in the Old Testament.
- 9.3. The Targums add an important comment<sup>3</sup>:

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<sup>2</sup> The Targum (plural, *Targumim*) is an Aramaic paraphrase/explanation/interpretation of the Hebrew text of the Jewish Scriptures provided by the rabbis in the course of teaching. These paraphrases or explanations were not meant to carry equal authority with the Word of God, and it was normally forbidden to record them in writing, just to make sure that no one would equate them with the written Word of God. However, this rule was not always obeyed, and a good many were written down. In some circles, certain of the targumim were considered authoritative. Various rabbis whose targumim were recorded had followers who accepted their explanations as authoritative, and, in some cases, they put them on par with the Word of God. It is against this backdrop that Christ conducted His ministry and often clashed with various sects who "let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions" (Mark 7:8).

<sup>3</sup> "The main points of the developed Aqedah of the targums are: 1. Abraham tells Isaac he is to be sacrificed.

2. Isaac requests to be bound so as not to disturb the sacrifice and render it invalid. 3. Isaac has a vision of heaven. 4. Abraham prays that his offering and Isaac's willingness may be remembered before God. The prayer is not answered, but the favorable divine response may be assumed". Cf.

“Come, see two unique people in my universe. One sacrifices and the other is sacrificed: he who sacrifices does not hesitate and he who is sacrificed presents his throat”.

**9.4.** Isaac's *aqedah* acquires a value of impetration:

“And now, when his sons find themselves in a time of distress, remember the *aqedah* of their father Isaac and hear the voice of their supplication. Hear them and deliver them from all tribulation.”

**9.5.** Several targumic texts go in the same direction. The Targum one Song of Songs states that God forgave the sin of the golden calf at the Sinai in remembrance of the merits of the *aqedah*.

**9.6.** Isaac's *aqedah* is connected to the Passover and in particular to the sacrifice of the Passover lamb: “You are the lamb for the burnt offering”. In a commentary on Lev 22:27 it is said: “The lamb was chosen to recall the merit of the unique man who was bound on a mountain like a lamb, as a burnt offering on the altar etc...”. Before the Christian era, Passover was a memorial of the sacrifice of Isaac as well as the liberation from Egypt. It was believed that Isaac's sacrifice took place on the very day of the future Passover.

**9.7.** More generally, it even seems that the value of any sacrifice in the Old Testament and of the lambs in particular depended on the virtue of *aqedah*, the self-offering of the lamb-Isaac whom God had recognized as the victim perfect.

**10.** Some passages suggest a connection between the tradition of *aqedah* and Jesus:

**10.1.** John reports that Jesus was bound during his arrest

Jn 18:12 So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him.

**10.2.** Just as Isaac himself carried the wood of the sacrifice, John says of Jesus that, once condemned, “he went out carrying the wood of the cross”

Jn 19:16f So they took Jesus, [17](#)and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha

**10.3.** In addition, we must not neglect the parallel between the third day of the Resurrection and that of

Gen 22: 4, “On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. [5](#)Then Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.”

**10.4.** Referred to in 1 Cor 15:4 “he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures”.

**11.** The *Aqedah* played was decisive to the formulation of the sacrificial nature of Christ's death:

**11.1.** It emphasise the act of love and obedience on the part of the Son

**11.2.** And the Father's love who gave his beloved Son.

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Author(s): P. R. Davies and B. D. Chilton, “The Aqedah: A Revised Tradition History”, *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, October, 1978, Vol. 40, No. 4 (October, 1978), pp. 514-546, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43715037?seq=1>



**Abraham and the Father who delivers the Son**

12. Other New Testament texts are better understood in light of the sacrifice of Abraham/Isaac:

Rom 8:32 “He who did not spare his own Son but delivered him up for us all, how will he not with him show us all favor? »

John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. »

- 12.1. The expression “only son” recalls Gen 22: 2.16

“Take your son, your only son, [...] because you have done this, that you have not withheld your son, your only son from me”.

Cf. Hb 11:17 By faith Abraham, when tested, offered Isaac, and he offered his only son as a sacrifice, he who was the keeper of the promises, 18 he to whom he had been said: It is through Isaac that you will have descendants. 19 God, he thought, is able even to resurrect the dead; this is why he covered his son, and it was a symbol. »

**The suffering servant**

13. The Gospels of Mark and Luke suggest a connection between service and the gift of one's life in two passages of Palestinian origin:

Mk 10:42-45 Jqsus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 43 But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever would be first among you must be slavee of all. 45 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Luke 22:25-27 24 A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. 25 And he said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. 26 But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. 27 For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.

- 13.1. Jesus speaks in the third person and explains the deep meaning of his mission as an instruction to the disciples.
- 13.2. he establishes a link between his life and his death: both are ‘for others’. He came ‘to serve others’ and ‘to lay down his life for others’.
- 13.3. The verb ‘to serve’ is used absolutely: unlike ordinary usage which requires a complement:

Cf. Mk 1:13 And he was in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild beasts, and the angels served him

- 13.4. This understanding of sacrifice as ‘service’ will be developed in Jn 13 (washing of feet).

14. Clear reference to Is 53:10-12

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10 Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him;  
he has put him to grief;  
when his soul makes an offering for guilt,  
he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days;  
the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

11 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied;  
by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,  
make many to be accounted righteous,  
and he shall bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,  
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,  
because he poured out his soul to death  
and was numbered with the transgressors;  
yet he bore the sin of many,  
and makes intercession for the transgressors.

- 14.1. Mk 12:45 "giving one's life a ransom for many" reflects the formulation of Is 53:10 "his soul makes an offering for guilt"
- 14.2. Especially if we read in the Hebrew text "truly he gave his life as an atoning sacrifice".
- 14.3. The ransom logion as a whole appears to combine this text with Ps 49:7-9 which affirms that no human being can buy his redemption nor pay to God his ransom and that the redemption of his soul is costly and will always fail.

Ps 49:7-9 Truly no man can ransom another,  
or give to God the price of his life,  
8 for the ransom of their life is costly  
and can never suffice,  
9 that he should live on forever  
and never see the pit.

### 15. Parallel with Mk 10:45:

- 15.1. in both cases a life is given to obtain freedom or liberation for others
- 15.2. Mc 10:45 is a very ancient text and this suggests that very early on Jesus' gift of himself was interpreted as a service for others.

### 16. Other references to Is 53 in the New Testament:

- 16.1. It is echoed by the mentions of the forgiveness of sins during the Last supper  
Mt 26:27f 27 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, 28 for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

- 16.2. Then in 2 Cor 5:21

21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- i. just as the Servant did not commit any injustice (Is 53:9: "although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth) – so Jesus "knew no sin".
- ii. just as the Servant gave his life as a sin offering – 53:10 "Yahweh wanted to



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crush him with suffering; if he offers his life as an atoning sacrifice”, so Jesus was made a victim for us to blot out our sins;

iii. just as the Servant by his suffering justifies the multitude (Is 53:11 "By his knowledge the righteous one, my servant, will justify multitudes") so Jesus gave his life so that we may “become the righteousness of God”.

16.3. Cf. again Luke 22:37: “For I tell you, this must be fulfilled in me which is written: He was numbered with the wicked. So what concerns me is coming to an end” which refers to 53:12: “because he gave himself up to death and was counted among the criminals, while he bore the sin of the multitudes and that he interceded for the criminals”

**THE ANTIQUITIES OF THE JEWS,**

**Flavius Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews* 1.222–1.241<sup>4</sup>**

- <sup>17.</sup> **222**1. Now Abraham greatly loved Isaac, as being his only begotten and given to him at the borders of old age, by the favor of God. The child also endeared himself to his parents still more, by the exercise of every virtue, and adhering to his duty to his parents, and being zealous in the worship of God. **223**Abraham also placed his own happiness in this prospect, that, when he should die, he should leave this his son in a safe and secure condition; which accordingly he obtained by the will of God: who being desirous to make an experiment of Abraham's religious disposition towards himself, appeared to him, and enumerated all the blessings he had bestowed on him; **224**how he had made him superior to his enemies; and that his son Isaac, who was the principal part of his present happiness, was derived from him; and he said that he required this son of his as a sacrifice and holy oblation. Accordingly he commanded him to carry him to the mountain Moriah, and to build an altar, and offer him for a burnt-offering upon it for that this would best manifest his religious disposition towards him, if he preferred what was pleasing to God, before the preservation of his own son.
- <sup>18.</sup> **225**2. Now Abraham thought that it was not right to disobey God in any thing, but that he was obliged to serve him in every circumstance of life, since all creatures that live enjoy their life by his providence, and the kindness he bestows on them. Accordingly he concealed this command of God, and his own intentions about the slaughter of his son, from his wife, as also from every one of his servants, otherwise he should have been hindered from his obedience to God; and he took Isaac, together with two of his servants, and laying what things were necessary for a sacrifice upon an ass, he went away to the mountain. **226**Now the two servants went along with him two days; but on the third day, as soon as he saw the mountain, he left those servants that were with him till then in the plain, and, having his son alone with him, he came to the mountain. It was that mountain upon which king David afterwards built the temple. **227**Now they had brought with them every thing necessary for a sacrifice, excepting the animal that was to be offered only. Now Isaac was twenty-five years old. And as he was building the altar, he asked his father what he was about to offer, since there was no animal there for an oblation:—to which it was answered, "That God would provide himself an oblation, he being able to make a plentiful provision for men out of what they have not, and to deprive others of what they already have, when they put too much trust therein; that therefore, if God pleased to be present and propitious at this sacrifice, he would provide himself an oblation."
- <sup>19.</sup> **228**3. As soon as the altar was prepared, and Abraham had laid on the wood, and all things were entirely ready, he said to his son, "O son, I poured out a vast number of prayers that I might have thee for my son; when thou wast come into the world, there was nothing that could contribute to thy support for which I was not greatly solicitous, nor any thing wherein I thought myself happier than to see thee grown up to man's estate, and that I might leave thee at my death the successor to my dominion; **229**but since it was by God's will that I became thy father, and it is now his will that I relinquish thee, bear this consecration to God with a generous mind; for I resign thee up to God who has thought fit

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<sup>4</sup> Translated by William Whiston [https://lexundria.com/j\\_aj/1.222-1.241/wst](https://lexundria.com/j_aj/1.222-1.241/wst)

now to require this testimony of honor to himself, on account of the favors he hath conferred on me, in being to me a supporter and defender. **230**Accordingly thou, my son, wilt now die, not in any common way of going out of the world, but sent to God, the Father of all men, beforehand, by thy own father, in the nature of a sacrifice. I suppose he thinks thee worthy to get clear of this world neither by disease, neither by war, nor by any other severe way, by which death usually comes upon men, **231**but so that he will receive thy soul with prayers and holy offices of religion, and will place thee near to himself, and thou wilt there be to me a succorer and supporter in my old age; on which account I principally brought thee up, and thou wilt thereby procure me God for my Comforter instead of thyself.”

- 20. 232**4. Now Isaac was of such a generous disposition as became the son of such a father, and was pleased with this discourse; and said, “That he was not worthy to be born at first, if he should reject the determination of God and of his father, and should not resign himself up readily to both their pleasures; since it would have been unjust if he had not obeyed, even if his father alone had so resolved.” So he went immediately to the altar to be sacrificed. **233**And the deed had been done if God had not opposed it; for he called loudly to Abraham by his name, and forbade him to slay his son; and said, “It was not out of a desire of human blood that he was commanded to slay his son, nor was he willing that he should be taken away from him whom he had made his father, but to try the temper of his mind, whether he would be obedient to such a command. **234**Since therefore he now was satisfied as to that his alacrity, and the surprising readiness he showed in this his piety, he was delighted in having bestowed such blessings upon him; and that he would not be wanting in all sort of concern about him, and in bestowing other children upon him; and that his son should live to a very great age; that he should live a happy life, and bequeath a large principality to his children, who should be good and legitimate.” **235**He foretold also, that his family should increase into many nations and that those patriarchs should leave behind them an everlasting name; that they should obtain the possession of the land of Canaan, and be envied by all men. When God had said this, he produced to them a ram, which did not appear before, for the sacrifice. **236**So Abraham and Isaac receiving each other unexpectedly, and having obtained the promises of such great blessings, embraced one another; and when they had sacrificed, they returned to Sarah, and lived happily together, God affording them his assistance in all things they desired. **237**Now Sarah died a little while after, having lived one hundred and twenty-seven years. They buried her in Hebron; the Canaanites publicly allowing them a burying-place; which piece of ground Abraham bought for four hundred shekels, of Ephron, an inhabitant of Hebron. And both Abraham and his descendants built themselves sepulchers in that place. **238**Abraham after this married Keturah, by whom six sons were born to him, men of courage, and of sagacious minds: Zambran, and Jazar, and Madan, and Madian, and Josabak, and Sous. Now the sons of Sous were Sabathan and Dadan. The sons of Dadan were Latusim, and Assur, and Luom. The sons of Madiou were Ephas, and Ophren, and Anoch, and Ebidas, and Eldas. **239**Now, for all these sons and grandsons, Abraham contrived to settle them in colonies; and they took possession of Troglodytis, and the country of Arabia the Happy, as far as it reaches to the Red Sea. It is related of this Ophren, that he made war against Libya, and took it, and that his grandchildren, when they inhabited it, called it from his name Africa. **240**And indeed Alexander Polyhistor gives his attestation to what I here say; who speaks thus: “Cleodemus the prophet, who was also called Malchus, who wrote a History of the Jews, in agreement with the History of Moses, their legislator, relates, that there were many sons born to Abraham by Keturah: **241**nay, he names three of them,

## **SHARP FAITH**

SUNDAY THEOLOGY TALKS AT SAINT THOMAS CHURCH FIFTH AVENUE, NYC

Apher, and Surim, and Japhran. That from Surim was the land of Assyria denominated; and that from the other two, Apher and Japbran, the country of Africa took its name, because these men were auxiliaries to Hercules, when he fought against Libya and Antaeus; and that Hercules married Aphra's daughter, and of her he begat a son, Diodorus; and that Sophon was his son, from whom that barbarous people called Sophacians were denominated."