

Isaac as a ‘type’ of Christ

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What this study is about

The term *type* is a specialized term, taken from the Greek τύπος, *tupos*, meaning *imprint*, and from that, a *figure*. A *type* is a person (or an object or an event) that pre-figures or paints a picture of the true one to come – in our case, Christ.

Quotations in this study are from the Authorized Version.

The miraculous conceptions of Isaac and Christ

Abraham was given the promise of a son [Genesis 15:1-6]

15:1After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, “Fear not, Abram: I *am* thy shield, *and* thy exceeding great reward.” **15:2**And Abram said, “Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house *is* this Eliezer of Damascus?” **15:3**And Abram said, “Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.” **15:4**And, behold, the word of the LORD *came* unto him, saying, “This shall not be thine heir; but **he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.**” **15:5**And he brought him forth abroad, and said, “Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them:” and he said unto him, “So shall thy seed be.” **15:6**And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

This is in Abraham and Sarah's old age [Gen 17:15-21].

17:15And God said unto Abraham, “As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah *shall* her name *be*.” **17:16**And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be *a mother* of nations; kings of people shall be of her.” **17:17**Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, “**Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?**” **17:18**And Abraham said unto God, “O that Ishmael might live before thee!” **17:19**And God said, “Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, *and* with his seed after him.” **17:20**And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he

beget, and I will make him a great nation. ^{17:21}But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.” ^{17:22}And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.

Clearly, this is a promise of a child *by a miracle*, albeit of ordinary human parents. How much more so when the birth of Christ is announced to Mary in the gospel: [Luke 1:35]

^{1:26}And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, ^{1:27}To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name *was* Mary. ^{1:28}And the angel came in unto her, and said, “Hail, *thou that art* highly favoured, the Lord *is* with thee: blessed *art* thou among women.” ^{1:29}And when she saw *him*, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. ^{1:30}And the angel said unto her, “Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. ^{1:31}And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. ^{1:32}He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: ^{1:33}And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” ^{1:34}Then said Mary unto the angel, “How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?” ^{1:35}And the angel answered and said unto her, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”

Under the ordinary laws of biology, it would be impossible for such conceptions and births to take place. It required trust in the power and faithfulness of God for Abraham and Mary to believe that these promises would be fulfilled. But both Abraham and Mary believed God, believed that this was possible with God, and God was pleased that they did. We read of Abraham in Genesis 15:

^{15:6}And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

Romans quotes this

^{4:3}For what saith the scripture? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.”

Sarah believed too (despite laughing at first, in Gen 18:22). From Hebrews:

^{11:11}Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

Let us read on in Luke's Gospel and see what the angel says about Mary believing:

“... ^{1:36}And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. ^{1:37}For with God nothing shall be impossible.” ^{1:38}And Mary said, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.” And the angel departed from her. ^{1:39}And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; ^{1:40}And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.

^{1:41}And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: ^{1:42}And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, “Blessed *art* thou among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of thy womb. ^{1:43}And whence *is* this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ^{1:44}For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. ^{1:45}And blessed *is* she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.”

Indeed, *believing* what God has said is an important principle throughout Scripture, and is most relevant today. John 3:16 reads:

^{3:16}For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Romans explains how believing what God asks us to believe today – that is, to believe in Jesus Christ – is, by God's grace, what justifies us.

^{3:21}But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; ^{3:22}Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: ^{3:23}For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; ^{3:24}Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: ^{3:25}Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; ^{3:26}To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. ^{3:27}Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. ^{3:28}Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

Let us move on and look at the fulfilments of the promises. In Genesis:

^{21:1}And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken. ^{21:2}For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. ^{21:3}And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac. ^{21:4}And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him. ^{21:5}And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him. ^{21:6}And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, *so that* all that hear will laugh with me. ^{21:7}And she said, “Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have born *him* a son in his old age.” ^{21:8}And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the *same* day that Isaac was weaned.

In Luke:

^{2:1}And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. ^{2:2}(*And* this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) ^{2:3}And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. ^{2:4}And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth,

into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) ^{2:5}To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. ^{2:6}And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. ^{2:7}**And she brought forth her firstborn son,** and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. ^{2:8}And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ^{2:9}And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. ^{2:10}And the angel said unto them, “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. ^{2:11}For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. ...”

The sacrifice of the only and beloved son

We now come to the most important divine principle of a *sacrifice*. Abraham was asked to offer up Isaac, Genesis 22:

^{22:1}And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, “Abraham: and he said, Behold, *here I am.*” ^{22:2}And he said, “Take now thy son, thine **only son** Isaac, **whom thou lovest**, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and **offer him there for a burnt offering** upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.”

Observe that God calls Isaac the *only* son of Abraham, since the other sons (Ishmael and others) were in lack of faith, by Abraham's maids, not by Sarah. Note also the phrase *whom thou lovest*, as this will also be seen to have a parallel. The word *tempt* above (נִסָּה) could perhaps better be translated *test*.

Christ is the *only-begotten*:

^{3:16}For God so loved the world, that he gave his **only begotten** Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Christ is the *beloved Son*:

3:21 Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, **3:22** And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art **my beloved Son**; in thee I am well pleased.

Incidentally, Mount Moriah is in Jerusalem where Solomon built the temple, from 2 Chronicles 3:1:

^{3:1}Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in mount **Moriah**, where *the LORD* appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite.

Faith in resurrection

Abraham obeyed without question:

22:3And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. **22:4**Then on the **third day** Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. **22:5**And Abraham said unto his young men, “Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and **come again** to you.”

The *third day* is symbolic of resurrection. From Matthew's gospel

12:38Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, “Master, we would see a sign from thee.” **12:39**But he answered and said unto them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: **12:40**For as Jonas was **three days and three nights** in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be **three days and three nights** in the heart of the earth.”

Here is the reference in Jonah:

1:17Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish **three days and three nights**.

Furthermore, when Abraham said that he and Isaac would *come again*, (plural verb, וַיָּשׁוּבָה), what else can this be than that he was counting on resurrection of Isaac? Hebrews explains that Abraham considered God capable of resurrecting Isaac:

11:17By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, **11:18**Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: **11:19**Accounting that God *was* able to **raise him up, even from the dead**; from whence also he received him in a figure.

The lamb provided by God – slain

Continuing with Abraham in Genesis:

22:6And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid *it* upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. **22:7**And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, “My father:” and he said, “Here *am* I, my son.” And he said, “Behold the fire and the wood: but where *is* the **lamb** for a burnt offering?” **22:8**And Abraham said, “My son, **God will provide himself a lamb** for a burnt offering:” so they went both of them together. **22:9**And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and **bound** Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. **22:10**And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife **to slay his son**.

The *lamb* is prominent throughout Scripture and is used of Christ. We see it in the Old Testament where the Passover was instigated, in Exodus:

^{12:1}And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, ^{12:2}“This month *shall be* unto you the beginning of months: it *shall be* the first month of the year to you. ^{12:3}Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, ‘In the tenth *day* of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of *their* fathers, a lamb for an house: ^{12:4}And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take *it* according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. ^{12:5}**Your lamb shall be without blemish**, a male of the first year: ye shall take *it* out from the sheep, or from the goats: ^{12:6}And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening...’ ”

In John's gospel, John the Baptist points out Jesus as the *Lamb of God*. This is the deeper answer to Isaac's question, “*Where is the lamb?*”

^{1:29}The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, “Behold the **Lamb of God**, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

Peter speaks of Christ as a *Lamb without blemish*, (and also refers to resurrection):

^{1:18}Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, [as] silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; ^{1:19}But with the precious blood of Christ, as of **a lamb without blemish** and without spot: ^{1:20}Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, ^{1:21}Who by him do believe in God, that **raised him up from the dead**, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

The word *bound* in Genesis 22:9 has a parallel in Mark 15:1:

^{15:1}And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and **bound** Jesus, and carried *him* away, and delivered *him* to Pilate.

As for *to slay his son*, Genesis 22:10, we know that Christ was a sacrifice, like the Passover lamb, for us, e.g. in 1 Corinthians:

^{5:7}Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even **Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:**

At the point we reached in Genesis above, where Abraham stretched out his hand to slay his son, God counts the act as done:

^{22:11}And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, “Abraham, Abraham:” and he said, “Here *am* I.” ^{22:12}And he said, “Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing **thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son** from me.” ^{22:13}And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind *him* a **ram** caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering **in the stead of** his son. ^{22:14}And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said *to* this day, “In the mount of the

LORD it shall be seen.” ^{22:15}And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, ^{22:16}And said, “By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast **not withheld thy son, thine only son:** ^{22:17}That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which *is* upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; ^{22:18}And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.”

When Abraham had shown that he was willing to trust God and slay his son, God was pleased that Abraham had not *withheld* his son (counting the offering as done). The word for *withheld* is חָסַק, from חָסַק, *hasakh*, and in the Septuagint ἐφείσω, from φείδομαι, *phaidomai*, *to spare*. The same Greek verb is used in Romans 8:32, now in the third person, ἐφείσατο, translated *spared*:

^{8:32}He that **spared** not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

The substitutionary principle

The words *instead of* deserve attention. Abraham offered a ram *instead of* his son Isaac. Christ died for us. He bore our sin *instead of* us. Isaiah brings this out, (again in the context of a lamb), where the One spoken of was killed *for the transgression of God's people* (i.e. His earthly people in view at the time, since widened to all who believe, Acts 13:39). From Isaiah:

^{53:7}He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. ^{53:8}He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: **for the transgression of my people** was he stricken.

1 Peter 3:18 also brings out the substitutionary principle, seen in Genesis in that the ram was substituted for Isaac:

^{3:18}For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, **the just for the unjust**, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

So we see the substitutionary principle taught in Genesis, and applied to the full in Christ's sacrifice.

The love of God

Friends, it is the love of God that is behind all this. From Romans:

^{5:8}But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, **Christ died for us.**