

Item #18 (A Handy Map of God's Second Thoughts)

No map of God's First Thoughts is needed, for this map is visible all around us: men and women's (Adam and Eve's) existential pleasure in making their own norms for acting and following up thereon. No need to read Genesis 2–3, just look around the world we live in today. When God decided that a remake was needed for His First Thoughts He picked Abraham for a new beginning, as Scripture plainly indicates by abandoning the myths of Genesis 1–11 and choosing a historical figure named Abram to begin to carry His Second Thoughts out. The story of Abraham and his descendants begins at Genesis 12,1-5 with the clear statement that Abram and his wife Sarai and their descendants are being called to lead a great nation to a new land that will receive a great blessing, a blessing that Adam and Eve forswore. As a sign of their covenant relationship with Him God tells Abram to change his name to Abraham, and Sarai's name to Sarah (Genesis 17,5.15). Even though Abraham and Sarah were beyond the normal age of having a child, God enabled Sarah to give birth to a son, Isaac (Genesis 21,1-7), which in Hebrew means "he who laughs" and is chosen by Abraham to express his joy, a motive recognized by Sarah (Genesis 21,6. This motive replaces the previous motive of skepticism of Sarah and surprise of Abraham at the news that Sara would give birth at an advanced age (Genesis 18,9-15). The fulfillment of this seeming impossibility is taken by Abraham as an indication that nothing is impossible to God (see Genesis 18,14), even resurrection from the dead (see Hebrews 11,19). When Isaac is a mature person God puts Abraham to the test by commanding him to sacrifice his son Isaac (Genesis 22,1-18). He does this to enable Abraham to show that he is God-fearing (see Genesis 22,12) and thus to legitimately claim that all those like Abraham who pass a test as he did are his spiritual descendants. This essential type of legitimacy is recognized by Paul in, among other places, Galatians 4,23.29). Recognition of Abraham as the official genitor of all who approved by God the Father as heirs of the New Dispensation are these words found in the First Eucharistic Prayer: "Abraham, our father in faith", that is, faith in God is the official way to be the heir to God's blessing for all mankind. And Isaac is not the progeny or "seed" to which God's promises recorded in Genesis 15,4 will be transmitted, but Jesus Christ (Galatians 4,1-11). And Jesus Christ is the heir to Abraham because he has fulfilled the foreshadowing given by Isaac in Genesis 22. Abraham's intention to offer Isaac in sacrifice was complete, but it was not brought to completion in act through the intervention of God Himself made known by the angel (Genesis 22,11-13). But Abraham's faith has borne fruit: because of it God's unmerited grace has had added to it Abraham's merit gained in the passing of God's test and made explicit by God Himself through the words of the angel in Genesis 22,15-18. That is, the act of every child of Abraham, i.e., everyone who has faith as Abraham did, is the result of Abraham's merit as well as, primarily of course, God's unmerited grace. The

incomplete sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham was the model for the complete sacrifice of Jesus Christ by His Father. Jesus Christ did not have faith in the outcome of this sacrifice of Himself as Abraham had in the sacrifice of Isaac because, being a Divine Person, He shared in the Beatific Vision. Thus instead of faith that He would rise from the dead He had fidelity to the vision given Him by Isaac. It is fidelity, not faith, that is expressed by the word πίστις to express Christ's inner comportment that makes Him a true child of Abraham. It is clear that Christ's expiatory death on the cross is the way that all mankind has been redeemed and the gratuitous promise of God to Abraham in Genesis have been realized. This has been achieved by the shedding of blood of Jesus Christ, high priest in His pre-resurrection body (see Hebrews 9,22) once and for all in Christ's unique death. But this unique death has been remembered by Christ, high priest, in his post-resurrection body according to His own instructions (Luke 22,19) through the instrumentality of those who have been consecrated to share in His priesthood (ἀνάμνησις). In this latter sacrifice it is the name of the Father that is the purpose of the action, so that His promises to mankind through Abraham might be effectively remembered as realized throughout the ages. (See James Swetnam, S.J., *Hebrews—An Interpretation* [Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2016]). **(8 July 2019)**

