

descendants might become real, even to those who are not his ancestors. The Bible puts it in this simple way: “That the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit” (Galatians 3.14). Believers in Jesus are the real heirs of Abraham because of their faith in Him. They are assured of the blessings which God promised Abraham and his descendants (Galatians 3.29).

The Outcome

Once a year, you, my Muslim friend, commemorate Abraham’s deep, wondrous love for God in being willing to sacrifice even his son out of obedience to God. However, do you know that every day of the year, true believers in Jesus remember God’s unfathomable, glorious love for people, shown through God being willing to spare not even his Word and the Spirit, known to us as Jesus? He did this to prove once for all, his eternal love for us and his desire that we should not perish but, through faith, obtain eternal life by believing in Jesus as our Savior and assurance (1 Timothy 2:4; 1 John 4.14). Jesus said that he came not “to be served, but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28).

You are Invited

Dear friend, you are invited to inherit the blessings with believers in Jesus. He is the real *al-Masih* (the Messiah/Christ). By turning and putting your absolute faith in him, the Momentous Sacrifice of God, you too may

have the assurance of eternal life in the paradise of God. He is the only one who claims: ‘...those who come to Me, no way will I turn them away’ (John 6:37).

The Judge

Jesus came offering grace and mercy but the next time he comes as judge. ‘... now God tells people — everyone — everywhere — repent! - because he has fixed a day when he will justly judge the world by the man he has designated, having provided everyone with a guarantee by raising him from the dead’ (Acts 17:30-31).

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1. For example, see Ibn Jarir al-Tabari (d. 923), *Tafsir al-Tabari*, vol. 10, (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 1999) pp. 510-517.

For further information:

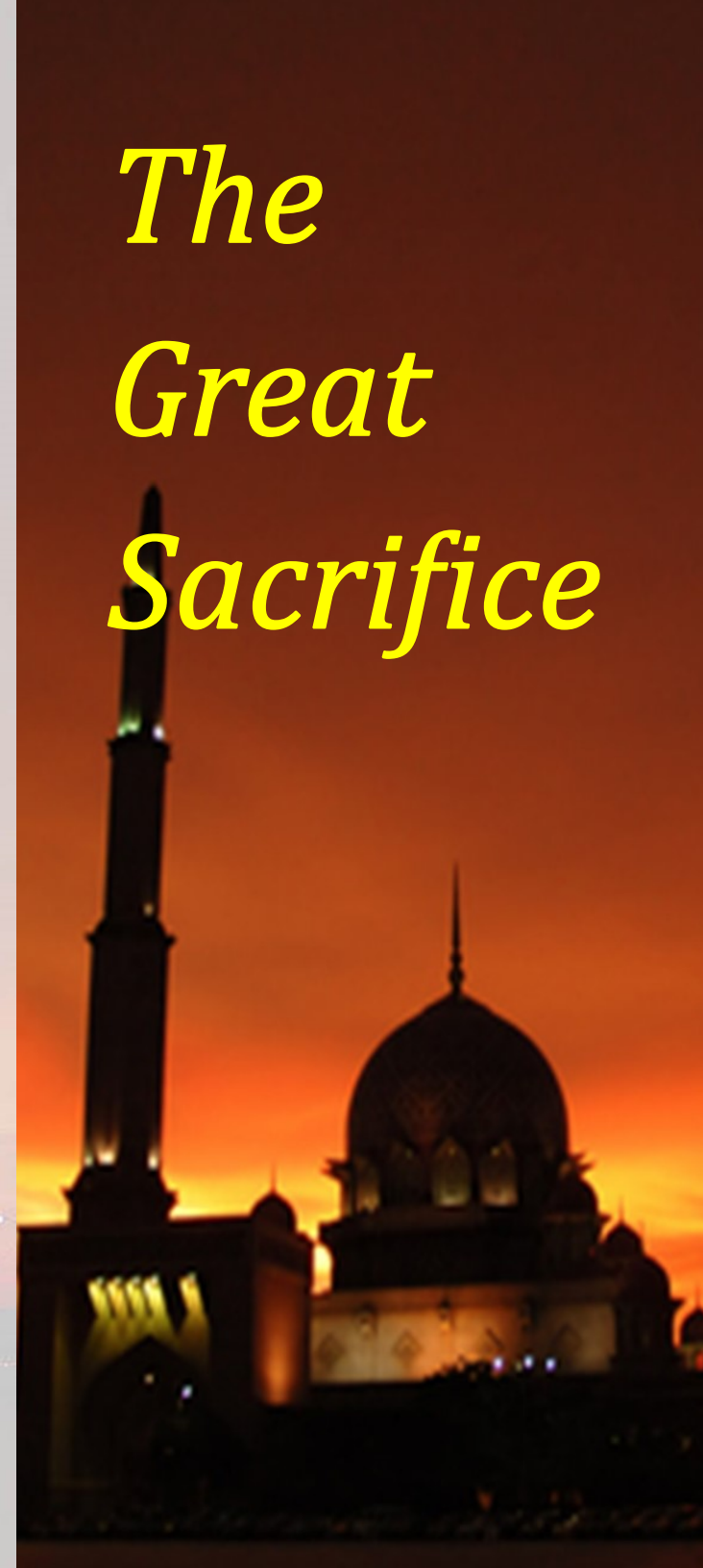


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Jesus to Muslims

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The Great Sacrifice



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In the light of the Bible and the Qur'an, we learn that God chose Abraham for a special purpose. The Bible states that God told him, "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse, and by you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed through you" (Genesis 12.1-3). The Qur'an also confirms that God gave the promise to Abraham that he would be the father of many nations: "Lo: I have appointed thee a leader for mankind" (Sura 2.124).

A Momentous Sacrifice

Almost every sincere Muslim in the world celebrates the festival of *Eid al-Adha* with great passion. This festival is observed in memory of the sacrifice that Abraham offered God. Muslims believe that God put Abraham to the test by asking him to sacrifice his son. At the right moment, God provided a ram to be sacrificed. In the Qur'an, we read of Abraham that God "gave him tidings of a gentle son. And when his son was old enough to walk with him, Abraham said: O my dear son, I have seen in a dream that I must sacrifice thee" (Sura 37.100-102).

Muslim exegetes claim it was Ishmael, not Isaac, as the Bible states in Genesis 22. However, the Qur'an does not state whether that son was Ishmael or Isaac. Several key figures among early Muslims believed it was Isaac and not Ishmael.¹ Referring to this

incident, the Qur'an states that it was a test and that God ransomed Abraham with a great sacrifice: "For this was obviously a trial - and We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice" (Sura 37:106 -107).

Muslim commentators usually say that this "great sacrifice" refers to the ram provided by God to be sacrificed in place of Abraham's son. But would a ram truly be a great sacrifice in comparison to Abraham's son? Note that it was the son, not Abraham, who was ransomed by the provision of that ram. Therefore, "the great sacrifice" must refer to another sacrifice to ransom Abraham himself. This raises a question. Is it possible God was pointing forward to a Momentous Sacrifice in the future?

A Detailed Story

The Qur'an emphasizes that the Injil and the Tawrat are guidance for all humanity, "clear testimonies for mankind, and a guidance and a mercy" (Sura 28:43, cf. 3: 3-4, 6:92).

These incidents are all recorded in great detail from beginning to end in the Bible. By studying it, one may learn the background of Abraham's test and what the supreme sacrifice was through whom God ransomed Abraham and all who are faithful like Abraham. We learn in this book that God's Messiah, Jesus Christ, is the one who has been made the sacrifice and ransom for the whole world. John the Baptist (known as *Yahya* in the Qur'an) said of Jesus, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1.29). He gave Jesus this title to emphasize his role as a sacrifice, like a lamb but with much greater worth.

When some of the Jews, arguing with Jesus, appealed to their status as the physical sons of Abraham and thus they were the heirs to God's blessings, in response Jesus answered, "Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day; he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). Abraham had vested his hopes not in his immediate physical offspring by their forefather Isaac but rather in his greater son after the flesh, Jesus himself, the Son of God according to the Spirit.

Abraham looked forward to the coming of Jesus to redeem the world from sin. For this reason, one of the titles Jesus is given in the Gospel account is *Ibn Ibrahim*, "the Son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1). He is the Redeemer, the one who was foreshadowed in the sacrifice of Isaac centuries earlier. Both Jesus and Isaac were descended from Abraham according to the promise. God considered Isaac to be the only son of Abraham for his plan to be fulfilled. The reflection shows Jesus is ultimately the Son of God, the true father of the faithful, *the ultimate reality*.

The Blessings

We are told that the "Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you.' So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith" (Galatians 3.8-9). Abraham foresaw the crucifixion of Jesus and knew that he was to be made a sacrifice for sin so that the blessings promised to him and his