

• *Abraham's radical obedience*

• *Mount Moriah – the hill of Yahweh*

• *'The Binding'*

1. Obedience is to be seen in a supreme sacrifice.

• *Putting God above the most precious thing in his life*

• *Isaac's question*

2. Obedience gets tested.

• *Temptation to turn back*

• *Abraham follows through his decision to be obedient*

Abraham obeyed God. When God's test came he obeyed immediately, radically, totally, unquestioningly. How obedient are you willing to be to God? How obedient am I willing to be? It is a searching question.

Abraham arose early the next day, took Isaac and two assistants, got the items ready that were needed for the sacrifice and started out for the land of Moriah ^{☐1}. On the third day he could see Mount Moriah ^{☐2}. It was a prominent hill in the area that would one day be called Jerusalem. The '*hill of Yahweh*' ^{☐3} is the same place as '*the hill of Yahweh*' mentioned in Psalm 24:3 and which is used as a symbol of the people of God in Isaiah 2:2 ('*the hill of the house of Yahweh*'). 2 Chronicles 3:1 tells us that the temple would be built on this very spot. It is also in the same area as the 'Salem' of Genesis 14:18. It is the place where Melchizedek was a great high priest for his people.

The entire passage is a famous one. Jewish scholars call it the 'the Akedah' ('the Binding') recalling the point where Isaac was tied to the altar.

1. **Obedience is to be seen in a supreme sacrifice.** What does it mean to be obedient? Often it will involve putting God above something or someone that is supremely precious to us. Isaac was the most precious thing Abraham had, the one in whom all his hopes were centred. Everything for which Abraham had lived for decades of his life was tied up in his beloved son. Is he really so willing to obey God that he will not spare his own son but will deliver him up to sacrifice?

Abraham is willing to obey God, no matter what it costs him. At this point Abraham leaves behind the servants ^{☐1}. No one can help him in this part of what he has to do.

The sacrifice is to be a '*whole burnt offering*' ^{☐1}. Abraham has the wood, and a container in which there are coals of fire, and a knife which he intends to use at the moment of sacrifice ^{☐2}. Then there comes a painful moment. '*Where is the lamb for the burnt offering?*', asks Isaac ^{☐3}. It was a question that must have driven home to Abraham the pain of what it was he was doing. But God helps him and he gives an answer which is true but evasive ^{☐4}, and the two proceed on their way.

2. **Obedience gets tested.** The whole procedure is drawn out. It has taken days to get to Moriah. Then Abraham has to climb the hill. Then he has to build the altar ^{☐1}. Along the way Isaac has asked him a painful question. The entire procedure is prolonged. This means that Abraham is being faced with the temptation to back away from what he is doing. It is easy to 'resolve' to obey God but the test is whether one continues when the difficulties and sufferings come, and all of the implications of obedience become plain. Abraham continues hour by hour, persisting in following through in everything that will be involved in what God has asked from him. He is not just 'willing' to be obedient; he is being obedient! He does not know that there will be any release from what he is about to do. He persuades Isaac to get on the altar,

☐1 22:3
☐2 22:4
☐3 22:14

☐1 22:5

☐1 22:6
☐2 22:6
☐3 22:7
☐4 22:8

☐1 22:9

and ties him there. Perhaps he explains to Isaac what has to happen. Isaac is suffering as well as Abraham. Abraham is following through in obeying God to the very end. He takes the knife in his hand ^{☞2} and is about to perform the act of slaughter upon his own son.

☞2 22:10

3. Obedience gets rewarded

• God's intervention at the very last moment

3. **Obedience gets rewarded.** At the very last moment, the angel cries from the sky. 'Abraham, Abraham!' ^{☞1}. It is one of the few places in Scripture where a name is called twice (see Acts 9:4 and a few others). The angel releases Abraham from the terrible slaughter he was just about to perform. 'Now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son from Me' ^{☞2}. Soon God provides a sacrifice as a substitute for the son who was about to die ^{☞3}. The place becomes known as 'Yahweh Yireh' – 'the LORD will see to it', and when the story of what has happened becomes known a proverb comes into being. 'In the mount of Yahweh it will be provided' ^{☞4}.

☞1 22:11

☞2 22:12

☞3 22:13

☞4 22:14

• The oath is given - irresistible, unalterable, uncancelable and unchangeable

Then there comes another distinct word from the angel. 'By myself I have sworn...'. This is what everything in the story of Abraham has been leading to. God takes an oath and the promise is finally inherited. He has got it. God has sworn and will not change His mind. The forward movement of salvation through the seed of Abraham is now certain. The promise is being given to Abraham. From now on it will be overpowering, irresistible, unalterable, uncancelable and unchangeable.

4. The sacrifice of Isaac pointed to God's surrender of His own Son


• Both alone in their sufferings

4. **The sacrifice of Isaac pointed to God's surrender of His own Son.** God did what Abraham was released from doing. Romans 8:32 says 'He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with him freely give us all things?' It is no accident that it is using the very language of Genesis 22:16. God held nothing back. God was (so to speak) 'obedient' to the demands of the situation when He delivered him up to the power of darkness ^{☞1}.

☞1 Luke 22:53

Just as Abraham and Isaac were alone in their sufferings, since the servants had been sent away, so God and His Son were alone in the transaction which took place on the cross. 'He took up our infirmities ... carried our sorrows ... We regarded him as abused ... smitten by God, and afflicted' ^{☞1}.

☞1 Isaiah 53:4

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